THE UNIVERSITY OF JORDAN SERIALS DIVISION

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر باللغة الانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية «الرأي»

Volume 22 Number 6659 | AMMAN SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1997, JUMADA II 10, 1418 | Price: Jordan 200 fils

Arafat and King discuss murder attempt and Mideast peace

GAZA CITY (AFP) — King Hussein and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat spoke by phone Saturday and discussed the strong relations between Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), the official Palestinian news agency, Wafa, reported. The two leaders discussed "recent political developments," including Wednesday's summit meeting between President Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu — the first of its kind for eight months. Relations between King Hussein and President Arafat have been strained by Israel's decision to bow to Jordanian demands to release Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, the main opposition movement to the PNA.

Hizbollah kills 2 SLA men in south Lebanon

MARJAYOUN (R) — Two pro-Israeli militiamen were killed Saturday in a Hizbollah attack on a South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia patrol in south Lebanon, SLA sources said. They said guerrillas set off a roadside bomb near an SLA patrol heading towards the outpost of Toumat-Niha in Jizzine — a finger of territory outside Israel's self-declared security zone in south Lebanon under the control of the SLA. In Beirut, Hizbollah claimed responsibility for the attack, saying another group of guerrillas later fired machineguns and rocket-propelled grenades at the outpost. There were no casualties in the second attack. Shortly afterwards, SLA artillery men shelled hills south of the eastern Bekaa Valley, just opposite the Toumat-Niha area, Lebanese security sources said.

68 new runners join poll race bringing total to 508

Haddadin to sue after Amman governor orders 195 'anti-Israeli' banners down

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Sixty-eight new candidates signed in yesterday, on the second day of official registration for the Nov. 4 elections, bringing the number of candidates so far to 508.

Registration procedures will continue today until 2:00 p.m., for the third and final day, the Ministry of Interior said Saturday.

The number of women who joined the race went up to 18, with five new women candidates registering yesterday.

In the 1993 elections, 559 candidates including only three women ran for Parliament.

The candidates who registered in the first two days of the registration period are distributed as follows: The Capital and Central Bedouins: 124; Irbid: 95; Jerasb: 19; Balqa: 45; Zarqa: 35; Ajloun: 35; Mafraq and Northern Bedouins: 31; Karak: 42; Ma'an and the Southern Bedouins: 32; Aqaba: 9; Madaba 25; Tafileb: 16.

While the newly registered candidates have already started distributing leaflets and hanging banners and posters in the streets, this year's campaigns seem overall poor in political messages and even issueless in some rural districts.

The absence of the main opposition groups seems to have prejudged the debate on many issues, especially the peace process, which heated up the last elections.

The overwhelming majority of candidates, though stressing that Israel must abide by the already signed treaties, are declaring themselves in favour of signed peace accords and normalisation of ties with Israel.

Samihah Tal, a new face running in Irbid, said "Jordan has not lost anything signing peace [with Israel], but rather gained rights

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Haj quits election race following peer pressure

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A former Islamic Action Front (IAF) deputy yesterday retracted his earlier decision to defy his party's boycott and run in the Nov. 4 elections.

In a handwritten statement to the press, former Zarqa Deputy Mohammad Haj said be decided to blow off the "candle [he had] lit in the dark" because be was asked to do so by "many brothers and friends, ... my teachers in life, whom I could not refuse [the request]."

"In the beginning, I thought that ... participating was better than sbying away, ... and lighting a candle was better than staying in the dark," Dr. Haj wrote, adding that he had also already found "good friends and brothers" who were supporting and helping him to organise the campaign.

However, after some of his closest and most respected friends went to his house and asked him to withdraw, he consented "out of respect," Dr. Haj said.

The Muslim Brotherhood and the IAF bave on different occasions reiterated that both those members who will run and those wbo will vote in the upcoming elections will be punished with expulsion.

The Muslim Brotherhood, the IAF and other nine opposition parties, as well as a list of popular independent personalities called earlier this summer for a general boycott citing the normalisation of ties

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Two Palestinians arrested with explosives

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Two Palestinians have been arrested with 80 kilogrammes of explosive materials but their intentions were not clear, an Israeli police spokesman said Saturday. Police said the case appeared of a criminal nature but the Palestinians arrested early Friday in east Jerusalem may have intended to sell the explosives to Islamists planning bombings against Israel. The pair had a few months ago stolen the explosives and ignition materials from an Israeli quarry near Jerusalem. Police said their main line of investigation focused on probable attempts by the two to sell the explosives to Israeli contractors but they had not ruled out the possibility they intended to sell to Islamists.

No breakthroughs from Netanyahu-Arafat talks — Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt's foreign minister said Saturday that this week's meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat produced no breakthroughs. "According to reports we have received, the meeting ended without result and no serious discussion took place on the principle problems blocking the peace process," said Amr Musa. The Egyptian diplomat made the statement to reporters following a meeting Saturday between Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and visiting Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral. Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat held a predawn summit meeting, their first in eight months, Wednesday at the Erez Crossing.

Iran reaffirms total support for Lebanese Hizbollah

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran Saturday expressed its "full support" for the Islamic resistance, the Iranian-backed military wing of the Hizbollah movement that is waging a guerrilla war against Israel's occupation of south Lebanon. "We support any struggle aimed at freeing the whole of occupied Islamic and Arab territory in Palestine and in Syria," Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Sadr told the Islamic Republic News Agency. Mr. Sadr was speaking after talks here with Hezbollah secretary general, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, who arrived in Tehran on Friday with a Hizbollah delegation.

Libya criticises Western, Egyptian joint military exercise

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Libya has criticised a joint military exercise between Egypt and three NATO powers taking place in the Egyptian desert, according to the official Libyan News Agency, JANA. The agency said that Egypt's "permitting foreign troops to train on Arab territory, waters, and airspace represents a danger to Arab security." Egypt, France, Britain and the United States are taking part in the military exercise, dubbed "Bright Star 97," which began Thursday. Troops from Italy, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates are also due to participate in the manoeuvres which are to continue until Sunday.

PNA aviation staff complete training, but still no airport

RAFAH (AFP) — One hundred Palestinians Saturday completed training for operating an airport in the Gaza Strip, despite Israel's refusal so far to let the airport open. The trainees, mostly from Palestinian National Authority (PNA) areas, took part in a graduation ceremony at the Gaza terminal in Rafah after returning recently from Morocco, said Fayez Zaydan, the head of the Palestinian Aviation Authority. They will oversee various matters at the airport including passport and customs controls, ticket checks and technical operations. Another group of 67 Palestinians will soon leave for one-year training in Morocco, Mr. Zaydan said. The opening of the airport is one of several articles in interim self-rule agreements which Israel has not implemented and has been delayed due to disagreement between the PNA and Israel over security. At a meeting of negotiators last week, the sides could also not agree on the start of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's use of the airport. The talks are due to resume today.

The first security and airport services graduates parade at the Palestinian International Airport in the Gaza Strip of Rafah Saturday (Reuters photo)

IAEA submits positive report on Iraq, but keeps file open

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Friday submitted a generally positive report on the dismantling of Iraq's nuclear weapons and capability.

But IAEA Director-General Hans Blix, in his regular report to the 15-member Security Council on Iraqi nuclear disarmament stressed that "the IAEA is not 'closing the books' on its investigation of Iraq's clandestine nuclear programme."

Mr. Blix, the outgoing IAEA chief, is due to brief the Security Council on Thursday, along with the U.N. Special Commission chief Richard Butler who bas just submitted his own six-month report.

Under U.N. resolutions adopted after the 1991 Gulf war, Iraq is to remain under international sanctions until the U.N. arms inspectors certify the dismantling of all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

The Vienna-based IAEA is monitoring the nuclear sector while Mr. Butler's inspectors are in charge of verifying the dismantling of Iraq's chemical and biological weaponry, and missiles with a range of more than 150 kilometres.

During on-site inspections since April, the IAEA had not found "indications of the existence in Iraq of prohibited material or activities," Mr. Blix said.

Discussing developments since 1991, Mr. Blix said in an overview that his agency was able to state that "there are no indications to suggest that Iraq was successful in its attempt to produce nuclear weapons."

But, he added, "certain documentary evidence is missing and some gaps in knowledge remain."

Iraq had been "at or close to" succeeding in producing highly-enriched

(Continued on page 12)

PLC speaker denies Jordan-PNA relations in trouble over Yassin

By Tareq Ayyoub
with combined agency dispatches

THE SPEAKER of the Palestine Legislative Council, Ahmad Qoureia, Saturday dismissed news reports that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat accused Jordan of seeking to undermine his leadership in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

"That is not true, absolutely untrue. The Jordanian-Palestinian relationship is stable, solid and based on strong pillars," Mr. Qoureia told reporters following a meeting with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali yesterday during which he delivered a message from President Arafat to His Majesty King Hussein.

"What was attributed to Ahu Ammar [President Arafat's nom de guerre] is unfounded and baseless," the Palestinian official said during a press conference.

Mr. Qoureia was responding to a question on news reports which quoted Mr. Arafat as saying at a closed-door meeting of the legislative council last week that the release of

(Continued on page 12)

Israeli army says Jordanian shot, killed by Israeli troops

TEL AVIV (AP) — A Jordanian man was shot and killed by Israeli troops while trying to enter Israel illegally, the Israeli army announced Saturday.

The incident occurred Friday around 10:30 p.m. along the Israeli-Jordanian border in the Jordan Valley. It was only announced by Israel Saturday at sundown.

"Large army forces... began an immediate chase of the infiltrator and extra forces were called in. Within a short period of time the forces caught the infiltrator close to the fence, shot and killed him," the Israeli army statement said.

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Mutawi says all Jordanian prisoners in Israel released

Families of prisoners contest statement

AMMAN (J.T.) — Even though the government on Saturday said that all 23 Jordanian prisoners in Israeli jails were released, at least two families says their sons are still being held prisoners in the Jewish state.

Israel has released "all Jordanian prisoners from its jails," Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi told reporters Saturday.

"Available information indicates that 23 Jordanian prisoners were in Israel. Nine arrived in Jordan while the remaining 14 [of Palestinian origin] were released and sent by Israel to their homes in the West Bank... All Jordanian prisoners are free now," the minister said.

The release of the Jordanian prisoners followed an attempt on the life of Khaled Misha'al followed by the exchange of two Israeli Mossad agents with Hamas spiritual leader Ahmad Yassin and tens of Jordanian and Palestinian prisoners.

Saleh Ajlouni, brother of Sultan Ajlouni, told the Jordan Times that his brother is still detained by Israeli authorities.

Sultan, who was sentenced in 1990 to life imprisonment after crossing into Israel, is detained in Ashkelon prison, his brother said.

"What the information minister bas said is not true.

(Continued on page 2)

Turkish deputy PM wants troops in Iraq indefinitely

DIYARBAKIR (AP) — Turkish troops should stay indefinitely in northern Iraq to ward off Kurdish rebels from carrying out cross-border attacks, Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit said Friday.

"Until Iraq reunites, our armed forces should settle down in the mountainous region," Mr. Ecevit told reporters during his visit to this Kurdish-dominated southeastern city.

His remarks were carried by the Anatolia news agency.

Baghdad has lost control over northern Iraq after the Gulf war. U.S.-led warplanes monitor a "no-fly zone" to keep President Saddam Hussein's troops away from the region, controlled by rival Kurdish groups.

Kurdish rebels fighting for autonomy in Turkey's southeast have also taken advantage of the power vacuum, setting up bases in northern Iraq to launch cross-border attacks at Turkish targets.

Turkish troops have gone into northern Iraq several times in the last few years, trying to wipe out the rebel presence. But each time troops leave, guerrillas return.

Turkey has floated the idea of a permanent buffer zone inside Iraq before, but met fierce international opposition.

"We are considering the

(Continued on page 12)

GID seizes weapons intended to destabilise Kingdom

AMMAN (Petra) — The General Intelligence Department (GID) Saturday announced that it has recently seized a large baul of weapons smuggled into Jordan by extremist groups abroad intending to tamper with the Kingdom's stability and security.

A GID statement said that units from its Anti-Corruption Department have recently seized more than four hundred and fifty pieces of weapons ranging from revolvers to automatic guns in addition to a large amount of ammunition.

The statement noted that the GID has discovered

(Continued on page 2)

No Mossad office existed; cooperation continues according to treaty — Mutawi

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government on Saturday dismissed news reports that Jordan has expelled several Israeli Mossad agents based to the Israeli embassy in Amman for their involvement in the assassination attempt on a Hamas leader last month.

"There is no Mossad office in Amman and there are no Israeli intelligence officers as such," Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi told reporters following the weekly Cabinet session.

"All over the world, there is a diplomatic representation, where you bave lists of diplomats accepted [by the bost countries]. They also include administrative employees who have their own work," the minister added.

"What is happening inside the Israeli embassy is their own business, but [to say that] there is an office for the Mossad in Jordan is not true, sucb an office does not exist," Dr. Mutawi stressed.

The minister was responding to news reports that originated from Israel that His Majesty King Hussein ordered the Mossad office at the Israeli embassy in Amman be closed.

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Qatar issues 92 invitations to MENA; 2,500 foreign participants expected

DOHA (AFP) — Qatar has invited 92 countries and organisations to next month's Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic conference in Doha, a top official organising the forum said Saturday.

Mohammad Ismail, president of the organising committee, said the Foreign Ministry has issued invitations to the Nov. 16-18 conference to "foreign ministers (of Middle Eastern and African countries), the secretary general of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Arab League, the United Nations, the European Commission, and a number of international organisations."

Qatar expects some 2,500 foreign participants, among them around 800 government delegates, 800 businessmen, 300 representatives of international or regional organisations, and 500 journalists.

Some 500 people are to attend the Doha conference from Qatar itself.

Two of Qatar's fellow Gulf Arab states, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have said they would not attend the conference because of the deadlock in the Arab-Israeli peace process.

No Arab country has yet officially announced that it will take part in the conference, at which Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is to represent the United States.

Israeli soldiers detain Palestinians after shooting incident in Hebron

HEBRON (AFP) — Israeli border police detained three Palestinians Saturday in the divided West Bank city of Hebron for reportedly shooting near hundreds of Jewish worshippers on the Yom Kippur holiday.

No injuries were reported, but police maintained tight security to avoid any incidents at the Ibrahim Mosque complex, a site sacred to both Jews and Muslims but which was restricted to Jews for Yom Kippur.

Israel beefed up security throughout the country for the holiday amid warnings of possible bomb attacks in revenge for a botched assassination attempt against a Hamas leader Khaled Misha'al in Amman last month by Israel's Mossad spy agency.

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement when observant Jews fast and attend synagogue services, is Israel's most important religious holiday and is marked by the complete closure of businesses.

A total of 21 Israelis died in two suicide bombings in Jerusalem claimed by the Izzeddine Al Qassam Brigade, Hamas' military wing, on July 31 and September 4, and since the failed Mossad assassination attempt, Hamas has pledged to carry on its armed struggle against Israel.

Thousands of policemen and soldiers were deployed in the cities, along the "Green Line" separating Israel from the West Bank, and in the occupied territories, Israel radio said.

In Jerusalem, white-robed worshippers amassed at the Western or Wailing Wall in the Old City while police maintained a low profile to avoid provoking extremist Jews who oppose any work on the day.

The army imposed a complete closure on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for Friday and Saturday, barring Palestinians from entering Israel, and blockades were erected between Arab areas and Jewish settlements even within the Holy City.

Security officials have expressed fears that Islamists would launch attacks or kidnap soldiers in response the attempted assassination of Hamas chief Misha'al on September 25.

They particularly feared a bombing in Jerusalem, the radio said.

Hebron, which is a magnet for both Jewish and Islamic fundamentalists and has a long history of ethnic violence, was reported to be quiet after Saturday's shooting incident.

Under a deal hammered out in January between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority, the Jewish state still occupies 20 per cent of the West Bank town where 400 militant settlers live close to the Ibrahimi Mosque.

In 1994 Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein entered the mosque and gunned down 29 Palestinians praying inside.

Since the collapse of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks in March, Hebron has often been the theatre of violent confrontations between stone-throwing Palestinian youths and Israeli soldiers firing plastic bullets and teargas.

Hamas leader predicts end of Israel

BONN (AFP) — The founder and spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, said Israel would soon be wiped from the map, in an interview published Saturday.

"This state will not exist in several years time," Sheikh Yassin told the German daily newspaper Die Welt.

Even if Israel meets Hamas's conditions for a halt to attacks, a "ceasefire does not mean permanent peace," he added in another interview with Focus weekly.

Hamas, founded by Sheikh Yassin in 1987, calls for the creation of an Islamist state in Palestine including present-day Israel and is opposed to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Israel released Sheikh Yassin from prison at the start of this month to placate King Hussein after a bungled Israeli attempt to assassinate Hamas politburo chief Khaled Misha'al in Amman on Sept. 25.

After his return to the Gaza Strip, Sheikh Yassin offered to stop Hamas attacks if Israel met the group's conditions. Israel rejected the offer.

"If Israel wants a ceasefire, it must pull out of Gaza and the West Bank, dismantle its settlements and stop attacks on our people and property," he told Focus.

But he said and group would not take part in negotiations with Israel even if its conditions are met.

"We do not intend to take part in future negotiations, even if our demands are satisfied," he said. "This is the duty of the Palestinian self-rule authority."

He said he had "good personal relations" with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Hamas rejects the self-rule accords with Israel, and has conducted a campaign of attacks that have killed scores of Israelis since 1994.

Qatari crown prince, U.S. official discuss military cooperation

DOHA (AFP) — A top U.S. military official met Saturday with Qatar's crown prince in Doha to review prospects for military cooperation, reported the official Qatari News Agency QNA.

The agency said General Anthony Zinni, commander-in-chief of U.S. forces in the Gulf, Red Sea, Gulf of Oman, and the Arabian Sea, met with Crown Prince Hassim Ben Hamad Al Thani over bilateral relations and the situation in the Gulf region.

Doha and Washington signed a military cooperation agreement following the Gulf war in 1991 which includes annual joint military exercises.

Earlier in Abu Dhabi, Gen. Zinni, met with Army Chief of Staff Sheikh Mohammad Ben Zayed Al Nahyan on cooperation between the U.S. and the United Arab Emirates. Gen. Zinni is on a tour of several monarchies in the Gulf.

Iraq slams new U.N. disarmament chief

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq levelled its first stinging criticism at the U.N.'s new disarmament chief arms Richard Butler on Saturday after he accused Baghdad of continuing to hide weapons from U.N. inspectors.

"Behind the mask of Richard Butler hides Rolf Ekeus," said an editorial in Iraq's official newspaper Al Jumhuriya, referring to Mr. Butler's predecessor, who was often attacked by Iraqi officials as being in the service of the United States' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

The paper added: "The United States would not have permitted the nomination of Butler in Ekeus' place if he did not have the same disposition" toward Iraq.

The sharp criticism follows a week of escalating tensions between Baghdad and Butler, an Australian who took over in July as the new chairman of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) monitoring Iraqi compliance in dismantling mass-destruction weapons.

Mr. Butler, who initially enjoyed a warm welcome in Baghdad, on Wednesday accused Iraq of "lying" about its biological arms programme. In comments to the London-based Arabic newspaper Al Hayat, he called the information supplied to the U.N. by Iran about its arms programme "ridiculous."

Mr. Butler's angry remarks came after the U.N. arms inspection team in Iraq on Monday reported to the U.N. Security Council that Baghdad is continuing to conceal weaponry from U.N. inspectors, particularly in the biological field.

The Security Council is due to discuss the report on Oct. 16 when it will decide whether to impose additional sanctions against Iraq, which has been under an embargo for the past seven years.

It has previously threatened to impose additional sanctions against Iraq if the commission reports that Iraq has continued to impede its arms inspectors.

On Tuesday, Iraq struck out against the U.N. sanctions programme, accusing the United States of blocking 79 contracts for food and medicine for its people. It also said the U.N. embargo is hampering its postwar reconstruction.

"Forty-three contracts remain blocked without explanation because of opposition from the U.S. representative on the U.N. Sanctions Committee (UNSCOM) and 36 others have been cancelled," Information and Culture Minister Humam Abdul Ghafur said.

Under the Iraqi-U.N. oil-for-food deal that went into effect in December, Iraq may export up to $2 billion in oil every six months with which to buy necessities for its population.

Mr. Butler told the Arabic newspaper Asharq Al Awsat on Thursday that Iraq would have to grant access to certain sites and allow UNSCOM to question figures involved in its proscribed arms programs.

"It's up to the Iraqis to choose: Do they want the sanctions lifted or do they want to keep their arms? If they want the arms, they will get the sanctions," Mr. Butler said.

Iraq's dismantling of weapons of mass destruction is a pre-condition for lifting U.N. sanctions imposed following Baghdad's August 1990 invasion of neighbouring Kuwait.

Kuwait denies boats opened fire on Iraqi coastguard

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait Saturday denied accusations that its patrol boats opened fire on the Iraqi coastguard, saying Baghdad's claims to the United Nations were aimed at creating tension.

"This is not the first time the Iraqis have fabricated this kind of incident," said Abdul Hamid Al Awadhi, director for international organisations at the foreign ministry.

The claims are "fabrications by the Iraqis to try to create tensions," he added.

Iraq submitted protests to the U.N. and the Arab League claiming that two Kuwaiti gunboats, each with between four and six men board, opened fire on Iraqi coastguard vessels in Iraqi waters on Sept. 25.

Kuwait denied the accusations in an official response submitted to the U.N. on Friday, following a similar response to the Arab League on Wednesday, Mr. Awadhi said.

Officials at the U.N. Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) which patrols the demilitarised zone along the border said no such incident had been reported.

UNIKOM, set up after the Gulf war in 1991, investigates any violations of the zone, including carrying unauthorised weapons or exchanging fire.

Iraq and Kuwait frequently trade accusations about violations of their territorial waters, not always reported to UNIKOM. In February, UNIKOM investigated claims that armed Iraqi boats entered the demilitarised zone.

Israeli army says Jordanian shot, killed by Israeli troops

(Continued from page 1)

Contradicting earlier reports that Jordan had cut-off security cooperation with Israel last week (see separate story), the Israel army said the two sides "cooperated fully," during the all night investigation of the incident.

The army said "documents identifying the infiltrator's place of origin and a knife," were found on the dead body.

The army said both Israeli and Jordanian Army commanders held a meeting at the site of the incident, exchanged information and "a joint investigation with the Jordanian forces is continuing."

During the incident, the Israeli army said it sealed off nearby Israeli settlements and brought in extra forces to the area.

No Mossad office existed; cooperation continues according to treaty — Mutawi

(Continued from page 1)

The reports also said that Jordan expelled all Mossad agents from Amman after the assassination attempt against Khaled Misha'al, the Hamas politburo chief, on Sept. 25.

The minister declined to confirm news reports that the Kingdom has frozen security cooperation with Israel following the assault on Mr. Misha'al.

"The Jordan-Israeli peace treaty stipulates cooperation in different spheres," the minister said, "as long as this treaty [is in force], cooperation will continue," Dr. Mutawi said without elaboration.

Agence France Presse (AFP) quoted a senior Jordanian official Saturday as saying that Jordan has broken off security cooperation with Israel. The official, who was not named by the agency, added that Mossad agents were expelled on Sept. 28 from Amman.

"It is unthinkable that Jordan will continue security cooperation with a country that has so clearly deceived it," AFP quoted the official as saying.

It said the official declined to disclose the number of Mossad agents who were expelled saying only: "They have been expelled from Jordan."

On Friday, the Israeli daily Maariv said that Mossad agents were expelled upon orders from King Hussein.

Dr. Mutawi denied that Jordan has demanded Israel to "decrease the number of Israeli embassy employees in Amman" in connection with the attack on the life of Mr. Misha'al.

Mutawi says all Jordanian prisoners in Israel released

(Continued from page 1)

It is baseless. My brother is still in Israeli jails along with other Jordanian prisoners," Mr. Ajlouni said.

"Our trust is high in His Majesty King Hussein who said that all Jordanian prisoners in Israel will be released," Mr. Ajlouni said adding that his mother was "shocked when she heard the [information minister's] statement" claiming that all prisoners were released.

In addition to the Ajlounis, Hamdeh Theyab Shara', mother of Fou'ad Shara', who she says is also held in Ashkelon prison, said that she too has no information about the fate of her son.

"Through the Red Cross, we managed to visit him in his jail in Oct. 1996 but unfortunately the Foreign Ministry does not know about his existence in Israeli jails," she told the Jordan Times Saturday.

Ms. Hamdeh said that she will send a message to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, to petition him to seek the release of her son, who was arrested by the Israeli army in Lebanon for allegedly being responsible for attacks against Israel.

According to news reports last week, Israel said that it would not release Jordanian prisoners who were involved in killing Israelis.

According to the International Solidarity Organisation for Human Rights at least five Jordanian prisoners were sentenced to life imprisonment by Israeli courts for allegedly killing Israelis. The five are: Sultan Taha Ajlouni, Amin Abdul Karim Sanei, Khaled and Salem Abu Ghalion and Mou'ayad Nasr Hajeh.

In February 1996, Israel released seven Jordanian prisoners. Six more prisoners were released in April 1996.

Haj quits election race following peer pressure

(Continued from page 1)

with Israel, the press and publications and the elections laws as the main reasons behind their decision.

In earlier interviews, Dr. Haj had said he intended to ignore the Muslim Brotherhood's threats of expulsion and was willing to pay the price for running in the elections.

Meanwhile, former IAF deputies Abdullah Akaileh (Tafileh) and Mohammad Azaideh (Madaba) officially registered in their governorates. They are so far the only two of the 15 IAF deputies of the 12th Parliament to run for the 13th.

Another prominent candidate, former Fifth District Deputy Mifleh Lozi, an independent, has announced his withdrawal from the race in favour of 47-year-old Khamis Lozi.

Mr. Lozi will contest the elections with another 37 candidates who have so far registered in the heterogeneous Fifth District, including affluent areas such as Tla'a Al Ali and Umm Summaq as well as poorer areas like Abu Nuseir and Sweileh. According to the Ministry of Interior's statistics, more than 136,000 voters are registered in this district, which elects five Muslim deputies, one of whom from the Chechen or Circassian minorities.

GID seizes weapons intended to destabilise Kingdom

(Continued from page 1)

that the amounts of weapons smuggled into the country recently were not restricted to light weapons for trading purposes but rather they assumed the proportion of large and organised smuggling operations of automatic weapons.

The GID statement said that these weapons were being sent by extremist political groups abroad and destined to clandestine groups in Jordan seeking to destabilise Jordan's security.

According to the statement, these groups have resorted to new techniques in weapon smuggling, adding that the seizure of these weapons has aborted these group's plans.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:10 ..... Little Rosey
1:30 ..... Jonny Quest
14:50 ..... The Magic School Bus
15:00 ..... Energy Express
15:30 ..... American Chart Show
16:30 ..... Tarazan
17:00 ..... French Programmes
19:00 ..... News in French
19:30 ..... News Headlines
19:35 ..... Fresh Prince-of-Belair
20:00 ..... Cinema, Cinema, Cinema
20:30 The struggle for Democracy
21:10 ..... Renegade
22:00 ..... News in English
22:30 ..... One West Waikiki
23:15 ..... Sisters
23:59 ..... End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:15 ..... Fajr
05:32 ..... (Sunrise) Duha
11:22 ..... Dhuhr
14:39 ..... 'Asr
17:12 ..... Maghreb
18:29 ..... 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 5516245
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Moderate weather conditions will prevail with clouds appearing at different altitudes and winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate to active and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman	17/28
Aqaba	22/34
Deserts	15/31
Jordan Valley	22/34

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 28, Aqaba 34 Humidity readings: Amman 26 per cent, Aqaba 36 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Fayez Dabbas 759155
Dr. Abdul Majid Al Sha'ir 791405
Dr. Adnan Zaghloul 898140
Dr. Mazen Nbali 830435
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Mazen Abu Bakir ..276852
Al Quds pharmacy ..... (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Mazen Saffarini 985832
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue	630341
Civil Defence Emergency	199
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	617101
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Dept	630321
Hotel Complaints	605800
Price Complaints	661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality Complaints	787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)	121
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs	623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radin Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
J. Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power Co.	636381
RJ Flight Information	08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport	08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalidi Maternity	644281/6
Akileh Maternity	642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Malhas, J. Amman	636140
Palestine, Shmeisani	607071
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845845
Al-Muasher Hospital	667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali	666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali	664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen	777101/3
Al-Bashir	775111/26
Army, Marka	891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital	602240/50
Amal Hospital	674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery	865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital	(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital	(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital	(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital	(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital	(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital	(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital	(02)247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08 (52700)

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:30 ..... Jeddah (RJ)
09:05 ..... Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:05 ..... Bombay (RJ)
09:20 ..... Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:25 ..... Beirut (RJ)
09:45 ..... Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
14:35 ..... Larnaca (RJ)
16:20 ..... Madrid (RJ)
16:40 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:05 ..... Paris (RJ)
17:50 ..... London (RJ)
18:05 ..... Istanbul (RJ)
18:10 ..... Brussels, Geneva (RJ)
19:10 ..... Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
19:40 ..... Rome (RJ)
21:00 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)
22:05 ..... Vienna, Athens (RJ)
00:05 ..... Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights
12:00 ..... Sanaa (IY)
12:35 ..... Bahrain (GF)
14:20 ..... Moscow (SU)
18:50 ..... Tel Aviv (LY)
19:40 ..... London (BA)
20:10 ..... Beirut (ME)
20:35 ..... Cairo (MS)
22:20 ..... Istanbul (TK)
23:00 ..... Cairo (MS)

Royal Wings (RW)
07:45 ..... Aqaba (RW)
09:05 ..... Amman (QAIA) (RW)
09:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:20 ..... Tel Aviv (RW)
18:30 ..... Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:20 ..... Aqaba (RW)
22:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:45 ..... Beirut (RJ)
10:40 ..... Athens, Frankfurt (RJ)
10:45 ..... Aqaba, London (RJ)
11:15 ..... Larnaca (RJ)
11:10 ..... Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:30 ..... Rome (RJ)
11:40 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:20 ..... Vienna (RJ)
17:00 ..... Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
20:00 ..... New Delhi (RJ)
20:10 ..... Cairo (RJ)
20:25 ..... Jeddah (RJ)
20:40 ..... Damascus (RJ)
21:00 ..... Cairo (RJ)
21:25 Abu Dhabi, Kuala Lumpur (add) (RJ)
21:30 ..... Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
22:00 ..... Jakarta (RJ)
23:15 ..... Bangkok (RJ)
23:50 ..... Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights
06:15 ..... Beirut (ME)
06:55 ..... London (BA)
13:00 ..... Sanaa (IY)
13:25 ..... Doha (GF)
15:35 ..... Moscow (SU)
20:10 ..... Tel Aviv (LY)
21:00 ..... Cairo (MS)
01:30 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
05:15 ..... Istanbul (TK)
07:45 ..... Beirut (ME)
08:10 ..... London (BA)

Royal Wings (RW)
06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
08:15 ..... Aqaba (RW)
09:30 ..... Amman (QAIA) (RW)
16:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:55 ..... Tel Aviv (RW)
20:30 ..... Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50 ..... Aqaba (RW)

Princess Basma presents women's conference achievement award

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Saturday presented the World Conference for Women Award for 1997 to Kawkab Ghanamine from the Baqaa village in the southern governorate of Ma'an for her prominent role in social community work.

During a special ceremony held at the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF) head office in Amman, Princess Basma paid tribute to Ms. Ghanamine's efforts at QAF's Baqaa social community centre which, the Princess said, has had a tremendous influence in encouraging local women's participation in the centre's activities and programmes benefiting the local community.

"This is an honour for Jordanian women at large and all women who assume leading roles in promoting the status and the work of women in the rural regions of Jordan," the Princess said.

"This award is a source of pride to all of us, as it expresses appreciation of our efforts in serving Jordanian women in the rural regions and in improving the life of women in the local communities. In addition, it is a recognition by the international institutions of the important role assumed by the Jordanian women in social development," she added.

Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Saturday presents the World Conference for Women Award for 1997 to Kawkab Ghanamine for her work at the Baqaa social centre. Ms. Ghanamine became the first Jordanian to win this award (Petra photo)

Underlining the importance of the role played by women in rural regions, Princess Basma said the success of any project or programme depends on work in the field, where women come to grips with difficulties and can display their efficiency in addressing these difficulties.

Princess Basma announced that QAF will from now on present a special annual QAF award to the best woman pioneer in rural development work.

Ms. Ghanamine thanked the Princess, while Kawthar Sheihat, who represented the Baqaa centre, outlined the various activities undertaken by women there.

Since the convening of the 1995 World Conference for Women in Beijing, a total of 75 women around the world have been presented with awards in recognition of their endeavours and their creative work in rural communities.

It is the first time that a Jordanian woman has received this award.

PREMIER RECEIVES AMMAN MAYOR, CONFERS MEDALS UPON AMMAN MUNICIPALITY OFFICIALS: Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Saturday receives at his office Greater Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi, and confers Al Kawkab Medal of the Second Order upon Amman's Deputy Mayor Falah Omoush, and Al Kawkab Medal of the Third Order upon the director of the Amman's Executive Department and Hussein Attiyyeh, the contractor who supervised construction of the Third Circle Tunnel (Petra photo)

Court overturns forced retirement of environmental corporation director

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Supreme Court has cancelled a decision by the Council of Ministers passed on March 6, 1997 retiring Saleh Sharee, the director general of the General Corporation for Environmental Protection (GCEP), and decided that he be reinstated.

The decision of the court, presided over by President Judge Farouk Kilani, noted that the council's decision was based on the contents of Dr. Sharee's file during his service at the corporation.

The court said in its ruling that the contested Council of Ministers' decision was a violation of the law, because a thorough examination of the plaintiff's file proved that he has been conducting his job efficiently, contradicting the council's claim.

Saleh Sharee

The Supreme Court found that the annual reports on Dr. Sharee's performance showed that it was ranging between very good and excellent, according to the verdict, which noted also that the government did not provide evidence countering the validity of the annual reports.

The supreme court ruled in favour of the plaintiff and asked that the government shoulder Dr. Sharee's lawyer's expenses, which amounted to JD50, and other expenses that the plaintiff may have incurred during the trial.

The Council of Ministers' termination of Dr. Sharee's employment was taken upon a recommendation by the former Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Abdul Razzak Tuheishat.

Since March, when the council's decision was taken, Dr. Sharee has been lecturing at Jerash University.

Dr. Sharee informed the Jordan Times, Saturday that he plans to resume his old post as soon as the court's decision reaches the government.

WHAT'S GOING ON

PLAY

* Children's play "Shahrour and Traffic Rules" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 10:00 a.m. (daily until Oct. 16).

EXHIBITIONS

* Photo exhibition on the impact of sanctions imposed on Iraq, at Hamourabi Art Gallery, until Oct. 14.
* "The Project of the Essence: Aspects of the Italian Paintings in the 90's" at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Yarmouk University, until Oct. 22.
* Exhibition of paintings and weaving entitled "Murmurs of Our Land" by Rihan Ghassib and Bani Hamida at Bani Hamida House Jabal Amman (Tel. 658696/7), until Oct. 30.
* Exhibition of Catalan masters of the 20th century entitled "Aura Mediterrània" at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, until Oct. 28 (except Tuesdays).
* Quilt exhibition "Piecing It Together" by Ms. Virginia Harris at the American Centre, Abdoun, until Oct. 20.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Prince Abdullah wishes Saudi prince well after knee surgery

GENEVA (Petra) — Deputising for His Majesty King Hussein, His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein Saturday paid a visit to Prince Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz, the second Saudi deputy prime minister and minster of defence, who is recuperating from knee surgery. Prince Abdullah conveyed to Prince Sultan King Hussein's greetings and wishes of good health and a speedy recovery.

Jordanian delegation attends education seminar in Riyadh

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan is taking part in the International Seminar for Educators, which starts in Riyadh today. Representing Jordan at the seminar will be Ministry of Education Secretary General Izzat Jaradat. Taking part in the seminar are experts in the field of education from Arab and foreign universities, as well as the ministries of education in the Arab World.

Court sentences two to death for 1996 Wadi Musa murder

By Rana Husseini
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Criminal Court Saturday sentenced two men to death after they were found guilty of murdering a 70-year old man in Wadi Musa in October 1996.

The court tribunal found Othman Haroun, 24, and Mohammad Sweilem, 21, guilty of murdering Abdullah Ali Nawafleh in the Nawafleh suburb in Um Al Basateen area on Oct. 9.

According to court transcripts, the two defendants had bought 12 kilogrammes of drugs, which they intended to sell in Amman, two weeks prior to the murder and hid them in a bag in a ruined house in the Nawafleh suburb.

On Oct. 9, the court said, the two headed to the ruined house to pick up the drugs. During that time, Mr. Nawafleh, who was passing by and knew the two, stopped to ask what they were doing, "and saw them carrying a large bag."

"Fearing that he might discover the drugs, the two pulled him inside the house and struck him with a brick on his face several times, then Mr. Haroun drew his unlicensed gun and shot the victim once in the chest," the court said.

The two dug a 40-centimetre hole and buried Mr. Nawafleh, then fled the scene. His body was discovered by the authorities six days after the murder was committed, the court added.

The court papers stated that both defendants, who were arrested two weeks after Mr. Nawafleh's body was discovered, confessed willingly to killing him.

Criminal Prosecutor Mifleh Lawzi had asked the court for the maximum penalty.

The verdicts, handed down by Criminal Court Presiding Judge Mohammad Ajarmeh and Judges Khalaf Raqad and Abdul Hamid Sa'ad, will automatically be reviewed by the Court of Cassation within the next 30 days.

Wildlife conservation group BirdLife selects Jordan for regional centre

AMMAN (J.T.) — The BirdLife International (BLI) council has decided to set up a regional centre in Jordan for the protection of birds, in cooperation with the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) and the British Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

The announcement was made Saturday by RSCN Director Khaled Irani, who noted that Jordan was selected for the regional centre in view of its public awareness and concern for the protection of birds and animal species, His Majesty King Hussein's active participation in international fora on the protection of the environment and the planet from pollution, and the successive Jordanian governments' keenness on safeguarding natural resources.

Mr. Irani referred to Her Majesty Queen Noor's leading role in this concern in her capacities as BLI honorary president and RSCN patron, where the regional centre will have its office.

According to Mr. Irani, the decision came after intensive consultations among the concerned parties and after an examination of RSCN's programmes in the country.

A flock of ducks floats on a pond at the Azraq Wetlands Reserve in the Kingdom. Azraq provides a resting point for birds migrating from Europe (File photo)

Queen Noor earlier this month hosted the first BLI international gathering in the Middle East, a five-day event that included bird watching at the Dana Reserve, Wadi Araba, Petra, and Wadi Rum.

The Queen joined Jordanian schoolchildren members of the RSCN at the Dana Reserve, according to the RSCN, which said Queen Noor also played a crucial role in the development of BirdLife's programme in the region.

The RSCN is an independent, voluntary organisation devoted to the conservation of Jordan's natural resources.

It was created in 1966 under the patronage of His Majesty King Hussein and has been given the responsibility of protecting the country's wildlife by the governments of Jordan. It is one of the few voluntary organisations in the Middle East that has been given such a public service mandate.

At present, RSCN is taking care of six wildlife reserves in Jordan, protecting endangered animal species at risk of extinction and conducting numerous activities aimed at protecting the environment.

Palestinian vocational instructors begin training Monday

AMMAN (Petra) — A group of 25 vocational training instructors in the Palestinian self-rule areas Monday will start a two-week practical and theoretical training course at the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) to upgrade their training capabilities and efficiency, according to VTC Director General Ali Nasrallah Saturday.

Mr. Nasrallah made the announcement following talks with a Palestinian delegation from the Ministry of Labour in the Palestinian self-rule areas led by ministry Under-Secretary Hisham Anabtawi.

The two sides discussed details of an agreement, expected to be concluded shortly, on organising training sessions for Palestinian vocational instructors at VTC's various institutes in Jordan.

Mr. Nasrallah expressed VTC's readiness to provide the Palestinian Ministry of Labour with expertise, training programmes, legislation, and regulations concerning vocational training in the Kingdom to help promote vocational training in Palestinian centres.

According to Dr. Anabtawi, the Palestinian National Authority plans to establish a highly advanced vocational training centre, adding that such a centre requires expertise that is found at VTC centres.

Mr. Nasrallah also briefed Dr. Anabtawi on VTC operations and future plans.

Man arrested after wife found hanged; four arrested in connection with unsolved murder

By Rana Husseini
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Authorities said they arrested a 28-year old man Saturday on suspicion of murdering his wife in the Nazzal suburb, according to official sources.

Amal A., 19, was found hanged Friday morning by her mother-in-law and husband in her house in the Thiraa neighbourhood.

Preliminary investigations pointed to a possible suicide, but official sources told the Jordan Times Saturday that there is a possibility that the woman "might have been murdered, or was pushed by her husband to commit suicide."

According to one source, the victim's husband discovered some letters and photos among his wife's belongings that revealed an affair with a man, prior to the couple's three-month marriage.

"The couple's life turned into hell after this discovery, and the indications are that her husband killed her, or that their constant problems and fights on this issue pushed the woman to commit suicide," the source told the Jordan Times.

Head of the National Institute for Forensic Medicine Mo'men Hadidi said preliminary autopsy results point to a suicide, "because there are no traces of violence on the woman's body."

"But we have sent blood samples to be analysed by the criminal lab before coming to a final conclusion," Mr. Hadidi said.

Police contacted by the Jordan Times said they are still investigating the incident.

Meanwhile, police Saturday announced the arrest of four people in connection with the unsolved murder of a 63-year old man, who was found murdered in his shop in Ras Al Ein area in October 1992.

Anees Raja Katoura was struck by a heavy object at around 10:00 p.m. in his liquor shop by unidentified assailants on Oct. 19, 1992. He was rushed to Al Bashir Hospital, but died five months later after going into a coma.

In a statement released by the Public Security Department (PSD), the authorities said they linked the arrest of the four with one of three unsolved murders committed in 1992 and 1993 by an assailant/s the media named "Abu Shakoush" (hammer man).

All three victims were found murdered in their shops after being struck by a blunt object, which police then thought might be a hammer.

Also at that time, a series of attacks were carried out on shopowners. The assailant/s also used a hammer in some of the attacks, but police then did not link these attacks to the same assailant/s.

In all cases, cash carried on the person of the victims was missing, but cash registers were left untouched.

The police statement identified the four as Kayed Ahmad Sa'eed, 34, Eid Ali, 28, Mohammad Omar, 24, and Jamal Othman, 26, all with past criminal records.

According to the statement, the new PSD Unsolved Murders Department reopened the file of the "Abu Shakoush" murders after arresting Mr. Sa'eed, who resided in the same area of the attack.

"After confronting Mr. Sa'eed with evidence, he confessed that he killed Mr. Katoura with the help of three of his friends," the statement said.

On the night of the murder, it added, the four, carrying only JD1, headed to a liquor store to buy alcohol and cigarettes to celebrate the release of one of their friends from prison.

The four decided to offer the shopowner the JD1 in return for the goods, and decided that "if he refused to sell them the goods on their conditions, they would strike him with an iron pipe and take his money."

"Mr. Katoura refused to give them the goods, and while he had his back to them, Ali struck him with the pipe on his head while the rest monitored the area, took JD 23 from the cash register, then fled the scene," the statement said.

Summit looks to freer, fairer 21st century Europe

STRASBOURG, France (R) — Leaders of 40 nations at a Council of Europe summit Saturday pledged to ban human cloning and passed a series of recommendations to make the continent freer and fairer as it goes into the 21st century.

The rare two-day meeting wound up after taking a closer look at democracy in ex-Communist states, hearing from new and would-be members about how they are implementing the rule of law.

The issue goes to the heart of the work of the council, which began in 1949 as a Western assembly promoting democracy and human rights and rapidly embraced almost all East European states after the fall of Communism in 1989-1991 if they promised to play by the rules.

In reality, members like Ukraine are suspected of continuing executions despite a council ban and Russia was publicly taken to task by Norwegian Prime Minister Thorbjoern Jagland over the case of an environmentalist charged with treason.

The summit's final declaration said the council would play a bigger role in protecting human and social rights and helping member states face the challenges of changing societies.

French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, in the closing speech, said the council, and its social development fund, had a role to play in fighting unemployment which he called "the biggest challenge we have to face, at the end of the 20th century, at the continental level".

Among the meeting's main agreements was a pledge to enforce a ban on any technique of human cloning that would attempt to create "a human being identical to another human being, whether living or dead".

The summit endorsed plans to install a new European court of human rights next year with enhanced powers and streamlined procedures to cut current long delays.

The plan is for the Strasbourg-based court to sit full-time, shed its present screening commission and receive pleas directly from European citizens.

It court currently takes an average of five years to give its rulings, which are binding for member states. last year it took up 624 of 12,161 pleas it received.

The declaration listed among its goals the universal abolition of the death penalty, real equality between men and women, and development of local democracy.

It pledged to improve protection of ethnic minorities, the poor, refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers, and to shield women and children from violence and sexual abuse.

It pledged to step up its battle against international scourges such as terrorism, organised crime, money laundering, drug trafficking, racism and anti-semitism.

The summit mentioned no specific measures, mostly leaving it to the council's Committee of Ministers to implement its goals.

Speeches revealed different views of the purpose of the council, a less-known body than the European Union — from which it is completely separate — and the possible rival Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

While West European states stressed the council's role in setting human rights standards for all states, eastern leaders like Russia's Boris Yeltsin and Ukraine's Leonid Kuchma saw it as a new forum for broad European cooperation.

One apparently attractive feature of the council was that the United States, a heavyweight in the OSCE and leading power in a NATO alliance expanding eastwards, is not a member.

In his speech Friday, Mr. Yeltsin took swipes at the U.S. by calling for a "Europe without dividing lines" and denouncing "forces trying to isolate Moscow... forces which do not understand that Europe without Russia is not Europe".

Mr. Kuchma said the council should take on a security role in Europe and become "a sort of legislative body in the system of European institutions".

Bulgaria's President Petar Stoyanov was much more on the Western wavelength when he told the council it had to help define European democracy for the 21st century.

"This is a much more demanding and broader objective because the process of reforming the mind requires more time and determination than political and economic reforms," he said.

Microsoft chairman Bill Gates (right) smiles while Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin looks on before their talks in White House government building in Moscow. The software multi-billionnaire is in Moscow to promote Microsoft products in high-level meetings often reserved for top government officials (Reuter photo)

Gates, Chernomyrdin agree fight on computer piracy

MOSCOW (R) — Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin told visiting Microsoft chairman Bill Gates Saturday he shared concerns about computer piracy in Russia and vowed to help fight it.

"We are aware about your concerns over piracy which we are also troubled with," Mr. Chernomyrdin told Mr. Gates at the start of their meeting.

"According to our information its share (of the market) reaches 70 per cent but in the last years there has been a tendency towards reducing it," he continued, adding that Russia was ready to work to protect intellectual property.

Government spokesman Igor Sbabdurasulov told Interfax news agency later that the two men had reached an agreement on a joint fight against piracy.

He did not give details of the deal, but quoted Mr. Gates as telling Mr. Chernomyrdin: "Piracy by companies which are selling cheap, unlicensed copies of computer programmes harm not only Microsoft and other Western companies but also slows down the development of Russian industry which produces computer programmes."

Street kiosks and disc markets openly sell pirated copies of many of Microsoft's most popular programmes in Moscow.

Mr. Shabdurasulov said Mr. Gates and Mr. Chernomyrdin had agreed that Microsoft would help develop software production in Russia.

The Software multi-billionaire was in Moscow to promote Microsoft products in high-level meetings. He talked with first deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais for an hour Friday.

Mr. Gates said Russians were well positioned to develop software because of their strong educational background.

He also met some of the country's top bankers and business executives, including the head of savings bank chain Sberbank and the chairman of Russia's central bank.

The chairman of Sberbank, Andrei Kazmin, said they had signed a $1.65 million agreement with Microsoft for the U.S. firm to provide software, Interfax said Friday.

Automation will also help Sberbank and other Russian financial institutions comply with new regulations that take effect after Jan. 1, including rouble redenomination, which will lop three zeros off the currency.

ITAR-TASS news agency quoted the head of the central bank, Sergei Dubinin, as telling Mr. Gates Friday that the bank had plans to launch its first satellite to create a global clearing and financial information network.

Mr. Dubinin said the launch would take place on Nov. 12, with the system going into service in 1999, the report said.

Mr. Gates also signed a protocol on providing software and services to Russia's largest oil company, Lukoil, a Lukoil statement said. The firm said it had concluded a large contract for software including the Microsoft exchange server last month.

Russian negotiator, Chechen leader try to revive peace talks

GROZNY, Russia (AFP) — Russian Security Council Secretary Ivan Rybkin began talks here Saturday with Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov, in a bid to inject new impetus into the flagging peace process.

On arrival in the Chechen capital Mr. Rybkin welcomed the fact that next week the Russian and Chechen parliaments would discuss draft peace treaties presented by each side.

"This is a step forward, in line with the accords signed earlier," Mr. Rybkin said, referring to a treaty signed by Mr. Maskhadov and Russian President Boris Yeltsin in the Kremlin in May and subsequent agreements on aid for Chechenya, the oil industry and other matters.

The two sides aim to hammer out a new, wide-ranging treaty defining Moscow's future relations with the rebel republic, devastated in the 21-month conflict between separatists and Russian forces which ended in August 1996.

Mr. Rybkin, who was on a one-day visit, confirmed that Chechen representatives had been invited to a debate on Chechenya in the Russian parliament slated for Tuesday.

The Chechen side will present a draft treaty which would grant independence to the tiny North Caucasus Republic. Russian representatives will present their own draft, under which Chechenya would remain part of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Rybkin said the Russian and Chechen constitutional courts could also join in discussion of the treaty.

Mr. Maskhadov's spokesman Kazbek Khadzhiyev said there were no plans yet for another Yeltsin-Maskhadov summit.

Mr. Maskhadov, quoted by Interfax, said he was ready to continue the dialogue with Moscow on any level, and the positions of both presidents "allow one to say that relations between Moscow and Grozny will be normal."

Under the truce agreement clinched in August 1996, both sides agreed to postpone a final decision on Chechenya's political status for five years.

Chechen Deputy Prime Minister Akhmed Zakayev reiterated Grozny's bottom line, saying Chechenya "is an independent state, and the aim of the talks with Russia is to achieve recognition."

Mr. Rybkin, however, said Chechenya could acquire independence as part of the Russian Federation, and cited Bavaria's relationship with the federal government in Germany as an example.

Mr. Rybkin said he would also discuss the future of the Russian mission in Chechenya with Mr. Maskhadov.

Relations between Russia and Chechenya nosedived 10 days ago, when Grozny expelled Russian representatives due to a dispute on opening an air corridor to the ex-Soviet republic of Azerbaijan. The matter was later resolved.

Referring to the Russian mission, Mr. Rybkin said: "If we decide that this is a superfluous structure it will be abolished, and in that case the Russian and Chechen governments will have direct contacts."

Security Council spokesman Igor Ignatiev said Russian-Chechen talks in the Black Sea resort of Sochi Thursday had allowed "serious complications" in Moscow's relations with Grozny to be overcome, and "concrete steps to be made towards strengthening the peace process."

Meanwhile, Khodzh-Akhmed Yarikhanov, head of Chechenya's Southern Oil Company (YUNKO), told ITAR-TASS that repairs to a key pipeline crossing Chechenya would be completed by Oct. 20.

Confusion reigns in Brazzaville as fighting rages

KINSHASA (AFP) — Fierce fighting raged around Brazzaville airport Saturday between supporters of President Pascal Lissouba and his rival Denis Sassou Nguesso, amid conflicting claims as to which side was in control.

Heavy and automatic weapons fire were heard around Maya-Maya airport west of the city, a reliable source told AFP, adding that it was possible it had fallen to Mr. Sassou Nguesso's "Cobra" militiamen.

Automatic weapons fire and sporadic shelling could also be heard in the centre of Brazzaville, but there was no clear idea which sectors were affected.

Aides close to Mr. Sassou Nguesso said Friday that the former military ruler's forces had swept aside loyalist troops to seize the airport and the deserted presidential palace after intense fighting this week.

And during a visit to Kinshasa, across the Congo River from Brazzaville, the president seemed to concede the loss of the airport.

"We lost one battle, but that doesn't mean we lost the war," Mr. Lissouba told reporters.

But the spokesman for Congolese Prime Minister Bernard Kolelas said later that the loyalists had beaten back an opposition offensive against the airport launched Thursday.

"Our forces pushed them back far from the airport," spokesman Naason Elo Mampouya said by telephone from Brazzaville. "Reports that the airport had fallen are in flagrant contradiction with reality."

He also said there had been no fighting round the presidential palace which Mr. Lissouba had evacuated at the outbreak of hostilities on June 5.

In a sign of disruption at the airport, internal flights have been suspended this week for the first time in fourth months of hostilities.

The fighting in Brazzaville erupted after Mr. Lissouba tried to disarm political militias ahead of presidential elections that were scheduled for July, but which have now been put off indefinitely.

At least 4,000 people have died and thousands more have fled their homes.

Mr. Sassou Nguesso, who was defeated by Mr. Lissouba five years ago in multi-party elections, refuses to recognise the extension of Mr. Lissouba's mandate following the postponement of elections.

The barrage of military claims and counterclaims here are part of the strategy of the warring sides, who make the most of the lack of independent information to put out their own version of events.

An independent source in Brazzaville told AFP that "total confusion reigns in the Congolese capital where even people supposed to know what is happening do not always have the information."

"However, it seems that the airport is under the control of Mr. Sassou Nguesso's supporters," the source said, explaining the government's denials by the fact that the prime minister "does not know what is happening on the ground."

The source said he did not know what was happening around the presidential palace, which is situated in the south of Brazzaville some distance from the front line of fighting.

Mr. Sassou Nguesso's forces have made several gains in an offensive this week, seizing back the prime minister's office, rail station and a fuel depot that they had earlier lost to Mr. Lissouba's forces.

Mr. Lissouba also visited Kampala Friday, where he briefed Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni on the situation in Congo and discussed regional matters in general, Mr. Museveni's office said in a statement.

Mr. Lissouba travelled from Kampala Friday night for Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the statement said.

Indian wins record pay-out for racial bias

LONDON (AFP) —An Indian-born British man who lost his job in a town council's Computer Department has been awarded a record pay-out for racial discrimination by a tribunal here.

Don D'Souza, 62, won £360,000 ($540,000) from Lambeth Council in south London after a seven-year battle over his sacking in a case which the tribunal described as the worst case it had ever heard.

Mr. D'Souza said after the hearing that he deserved every penny because the authority had wrecked his career and deprived him of his livelihood.

He was sacked in 1990 after four years as manager of the council's Computer Department on an annual salary of £39,000 during which he said he was harassed by white colleagues and repeatedly passed over for promotion because of his race.

The employment appeals tribunal ruled that he had been "the victim of shameful treatment and deprived of his job by a campaign of racial discrimination and victimisation."

"In the experience of this court, this is the worst case of unlawful race discrimination that it has ever had to consider."

The council said it had now sent out a letter to all staff stressing that racist behaviour would not be tolerated.

The tribunal said the award was intended to put Mr. D'Souza in the position he would have been had he remained in Lambeth's employment until retirement at 65.

A spokesman for the cash-strapped council told the Daily Mail: "We are already under considerable financial pressure and we don't have the resources to cover his payment."

The Daily Mail noted that the amount would pay the salaries of 16 teachers for a year.

German trade fair offers food for thought

COLOGNE, Germany (AFP) — The trend towards global trade is likely to have a profound effect on eating patterns in the 21st century along with revolutionary new techniques in "convenience foods," the German Food Fair opening here Saturday demonstrates.

After cocktail appetisers made from crocodile, kangaroo or emu meat, imported from Australia, the gourmet meal of the future might include German sausage and pudding stamped "Made in U.S.A.," all washed down with unpasteurised beer from Lapland or mineral water from the Andes.

This is the culinary dream — or nightmare — conjured up by the ANUGA fair where 6,540 exhibitors are taking part from 103 countries.

According to Elisabeth Nuernberger, spokeswoman for the Cologne Fair, the broad trends are the "internationalisation of the cooking pot and convenience foods."

She said convenience products had no need to be washed, pealed or cut up, and were ready for cooking either in the traditional way or microwaved for maximum speed.

A specialised institute in Neumuenster in northern Germany has estimated that on weekdays, a German couple devotes no more than 15 minutes to preparing a hot meal.

Shortly, the same couple will be able to get a portion of chips (French fries) from a distributor in the same way as people now buy cigarettes.

The German-designed FrittMaster machine functions like a coffee machine and offers a selection ranging from plain chips, to chips with ketchup, chips with mayonnaise and so forth, all served in edible plates made from maize flour.

"It takes 90 seconds for a portion of 180 grammes," said Thomas Schluenz, manager of PF Warenautomaten. He said the machine was ready for marketing immediately.

Thanks to an innovation by the Belgian firm Shop 24, consumers are already able to buy frozen foods and yoghurts 24 hours a day at a store where automatic distributors have replaced the personnel. Automatic cash tills are able to differentiate between national and foreign currencies, will reject forged notes and are already preparing to handle the European single currency.

"Buy global, sell local," is the slogan of the ANUGA fair which is reserved for food professionals.

There is no lack of choice for those looking for something exotic: fresh water lobster from Ecuador, champagne sausage, loaves made of Mexican beans, cereals with chocolate marshmallows from the United States.

As for drinks, Germany offers a vodka made from hemp and an anti-stress brew made from passion flowers, hops and Melissa spiked with vitamins and magnesium.

Above all, the trend is for healthy foods and packaging which protects the environment.

The share of biologically-grown foods in the German diet has grown from four per cent in 1988 to 17 per cent last year. Even drinks mixing coca and brandy tend to discourage alcohol abuse. Fruit juices are enriched with vitamins, dairy products have added calcium and the Finns are promoting "genius" eggs which are good for the heart because of their low content of fatty acids.

The French firm Danone has yoghurts in pots which disintegrate when mixed with compost.

Singapore bans Janet Jackson album

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Singapore censors have banned U.S. pop singer Janet Jackson's latest album The Velvet Rope because lyrics in three songs were found to be objectionable, the Straits Times reported Saturday.

The Controller of Undesirable Publications found words used in the songs — one about battery and abuse, another on homosexuality and a third on sexuality — unacceptable, the newspaper said.

Jackson is the younger sister of pop superstar Michael Jackson. The album is her first since the successful 1993 release "Janet," the report said.

Officials of her record label EMI International were not available for comment Saturday but staff at leading music retailer Tower Records confirmed that the album was officially banned from the shelves.

The Straits Times said EMI was looking into the possibility of releasing a special version of the album without the three songs for the Singapore market.

The newspaper carried a U.S. daily's review of the album saying that the work examines Jackson's unresolved issues from her childhood, and pressures she has felt as an adult.

Singapore maintains strict laws on obscenity and pornography. Sex videos and magazines like Playboy are banned, and obscene sites on the Internet are screened out by service providers, with varying degrees of success.

2 quakes jolt Japan

TOKYO (AFP) — Two moderate earthquakes hit Japan Saturday, but there were no reports of casualties or damage, the meteorological agency and police said.

An earthquake measuring 5.3 on the Richter scale jolted northern Japan at 6:45 p.m. (0945 GMT), agency officials said.

The epicentre of the quake was located in the Pacific Ocean off Miyagi prefecture about 400 kilometres northeast of Tokyo, the officials said.

Earlier in the day, another quake measuring 5.0 on the Richter scale shook areas of central Japan.

Police officials said they had not received any reports of casualties or damage following the two earthquakes.

There were no worries of "tsunami" tidal waves from the quakes, the agency said.

Tourists warned of axe attacks in Sydney

SYDNEY (AFP) — Police warned tourists Saturday to be careful when visiting the bustling Kings Cross red light district following a second axe attack there on an overseas visitor.

In the latest attack late Wednesday, a man befriended a 24-year-old Irish backpacker and then tried to attack him with an axe in a park, police inspector Royce Gorman said.

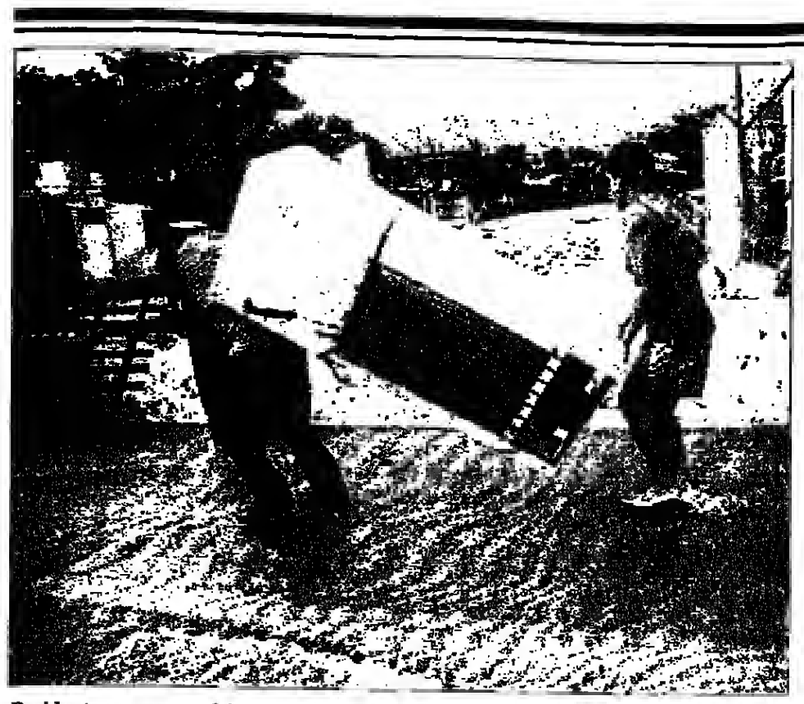
The tourist fended off the axeman and was unhurt, he said.

In the first attack last month, 25-year-old Czech tourist Jiri Zoufal was hacked to death at a busy intersection in the inner suburb.

Despite a major investigation and a public plea for help, police have been unable to find the man who wielded the axe.

"We're saying to tourists in the area, the same as we would say to anyone else, to take care... and to be careful not to be flamboyant with their money or valuables, and to remain in the main street or main area of Kings Cross," Mr. Gorman added.

"Any attack with an axe at the present time is of concern to us on the very basis that there's still a very brutal murderer on the loose," Mr. Gorman said



Residents rescue a refrigerator from their flooded homes, after Hurricane Pauline devastated Mexico's most famous tourist resort (Reuter photo)

Acapulco devastated as Pauline's death toll estimated at 400

ACAPULCO, Mexico (AFP) — The poor living in shantytowns in Acapulco, one of Mexico's richest resorts, suffered the most from hurricane Pauline, with the Red Cross estimating the death toll at 400.

Government officials said 144 were confirmed dead in Guerrero state — including 122 in Acapulco — and an additional 58 bodies had been found in adjacent Oaxaca state.

But in Mexico City, Mexican Red Cross President Jose Barroso, was more pessimistic. "The figures that we have are that about 400 people have died," he said.

Acapulco took a direct hit Thursday when Pauline struck, packing winds of up to 190 kilometres per hour. And the flimsy homes far from Acapulco's four-star hotels could not stand up to the wind, rain and floods.

"All the victims came from poor areas," said Juan Betancurt, a doctor tallying the bodies brought into the morgue. "We think the death toll in Acapulco will end up being higher than 150 because we've been finding bodies beneath the rubble."

Sixty per cent of hotels suffered significant damage, officials said, but no tourists were reported among the casualties.

Telephone services, electricity and drinking water were still unavailable in much of Acapulco. Communications and Transport Minister Jorge Sacristan told local radio, although Acapulco's airport had reopened.

President Ernesto Zedillo cut short a state visit to Germany to return to Mexico to oversee clean-up operations.

The killer storm left thousands homeless. Most of the victims were from the city's precarious shantytowns, and their few, precious possessions were scattered on city streets buried in mud or floating in ankle-deep water.

The rain and mud brought the detritus of the shantytowns — clothes, toys, dogs, pigs and cows — flowing down into the glitzy resort area.

Shantytown residents complained the government was late in providing emergency aid.

"We're alone and have had no aid — the authorities should be here," said a poor woman from a shantytown called Renacimiento, or Rebirth.

The scene was grim at the city morgue, where family members came looking to see if the bodies of their loved ones had been recovered.

"I'm looking for a cousin and a nephew. The water took them away and I don't know where they're going to appear," Teodoro Rodriguez said, sobbing.

In Mexico City, thousands responded to calls from the news media to collect donations for the hurricane victims. Crowds showed up at the several Red Cross collection centres to donate everything from canned food and bottled water to blankets. Several airlines have offered to move the items to the hurricane areas free of charge.

In the United States, the Mexican embassy and consulates across the country will be open over the weekend to receive donations for hurricane victims.

After touring Acapulco Friday, the Mexican health minister warned of possible outbreaks of disease in the hurricane's wake, including malaria and cholera.

There were an estimated 4,000 people staying in 28 shelters, although officials said the number of homeless families was much higher.

Friday special army teams arrived with equipment to clear roads of mud and debris. Impassable roads have hampered rescue efforts and aid distribution.

Acapulco, with a population of 500,000, is Mexico's oldest tourist resort.

Pauline was downgraded to a tropical depression Friday and was moving through the central state of Michoacan with winds gusting up to 75 kilometres per hour.

Queen Elizabeth arrives in India later today

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Britain's Queen Elizabeth II is expected to arrive in India today on a six-day visit coinciding with the country's 50th year of independence from British rule.

The British monarch and her husband Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, will arrive in New Delhi from Pakistan late Sunday, officials said.

The queen will be given a ceremonial welcome at the British-built presidential palace here Monday and will later meet President Shankar Dayal Sharma and Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral.

She will lay a wreath at a memorial to Mahatma Gandhi, the hero of India's independence movement, in New Delhi and attend an official banquet later in the evening.

The visit will be the queen's third trip to India — a country which has had links with Britain since 1600 — and she is scheduled to visit a war cemetery for British troops and meet Indian veterans, including soldiers decorated with Britain's highest military honour, the Victoria Cross.

Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh will also visit the northern town of Amritsar. She will lay a wreath at Jallianwalla Bagh, the site of a 1919 massacre of Indian civilians by British colonial troops in which 379 people were shot dead and around 1,200 injured after troops fired on a public meeting.

The royal couple will also visit the Golden Temple, Sikhdom's holiest shrine, in Amritsar.

In New Delhi, the queen will visit the headquarters of the Delhi Brotherhood Society, an order of British priests who set up base here in 1877, and open a British trade fair and an exhibition of artefacts from the British museum.

She will also visit the southern cities of Madras and Cochin where she will see a film shooting, visit a memorial where former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated, as well as a charity home run by a trust founded by British World War II ace pilot Leonard Cheshire.

In Cochin, the queen will be taken to India's oldest church and a historic Jewish synagogue.

The queen, who visited India in 1961 and 1983, is the second ruling British monarch to come to the country after King George V. King Edward VIII came here when he was Prince of Wales and Prince Charles has also visited India.

Prince Philip, who has paid several visits to India, will follow a different itinerary midway through the trip and go to the western city of Ahmedabad and Bombay, India's film capital and commercial hub.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook will rejoin the queen's entourage after a short break in London. He had accompanied her to Pakistan.

India's emotional links with Britain have weakened but Britain still retains some clout as a business partner. It is the second largest direct foreign investor in India, with investments totalling $713 million in 1997. But it is way behind the United States with investments of $1.6 billion.

74 feared dead in Argentine DC-9 crash in Uruguay

MONTEVIDEO (AFP) — All 74 people on board an Argentine DC-9 that crashed in western Uruguay most likely died in the accident, according to rescue workers who reached the wreckage early Saturday.

Rescue teams found the wreckage of the twin-engine airliner which crashed late Friday in a swampy, hilly area outside the town of Fray Bentos at around 5:00 a.m. (0800 GMT) Saturday.

The wreckage is spread over a vast area of rough terrain. One of the largest plane parts found is a wing, which fell onto a secondary road in the area.

An unusually violent storm that affected the area may have caused the aircraft — operated by Austral Airlines — to plummet to earth, Argentine airport officials said.

Sixty-nine passengers, including three infants, and five crew members were on board, airline officials said.

The passengers and crew were all either from Argentina or Paraguay, airline officials said.

Martin Sorondo, the head of public health of the province of Rio Negro, where the plane was found, told reporters that the likelihood of survivors was very low.

Relatives of passengers await news at the airport in Buenos Aires, after an Austral Airlines jet plane crashed with 71 passengers aboard (Reuter photo)

Search teams, which began to operate in the predawn hours of Saturday morning, were hampered by continuing heavy rain.

Argentine Air Force Secretary General Juan Manuel Vasquez said that Austral Flight 2553 vanished from the radar screens at Montevideo and Buenos Aires airports at 10:23 p.m. Friday (0123 GMT Saturday).

The Argentine aeroplane, which flew regularly between the northern Argentine city of Posadas and Buenos Aires, was scheduled to arrive at 10:44 p.m. (0144 GMT Saturday) at the Aeroparque, the Buenos Aires Airport for Internal Flights.

Gen. Vasquez said that the pilot and crew made a one-hour detour over Uruguay to avoid the bad weather.

During the controllers' final radio contact with the aeroplane the pilots reported nothing unusual, Mr. Vasquez said.

The wreckage was found hours later outside Fray Bentos, some 160 kilometres north of Buenos Aires.

Scores of firefighters, police officers and emergency medical workers rushed to the site.

One witness said he saw "a large red ball streaking across the sky" just before the crash. Others reported seeing the aeroplane engulfed in flames as it lost speed and fell to earth.

"I saw an enormous fireball that fell behind a hill, and then there was an impressive explosion and a flash," Gonzalo Bastos, a terrified local, told a television station.

In Montevideo, Uruguayan air force officials said they believed the plane crashed because it gained excessive weight after ice formed on the fuselage.

If the death toll is confirmed it would be the deadliest airline accident in Uruguayan history.

In Argentina, officials opened an emergency information service for relatives of the passengers and crew at the Aeroparque airport.

Search teams find missing bodies from Sumatra helicopter crash

JAKARTA (AFP) — Search teams in southern Sumatra have found the bodies of two missing passengers from a police helicopter which crashed in thick smog Wednesday, bringing the death toll to three.

"The bodies of co-pilot Lieutenant Eko and passenger Murod were found floating in a river," South Sumatra police officer Colonel Ivan Sihombing told the Antara news agency Saturday.

A flight mechanic was the only one of four people on board the helicopter to survive.

He was rescued from a river estuary by a fisherman after drifting for at least six hours after the crash.

The helicopter went missing Wednesday on a flight from Batam Island, south of Singapore, for Palembang, the main town of South Sumatra.

Search teams found the wreckage in swampland on Thursday. The survivor told his rescuers the helicopter hit a tree when visibility was just a few metres as the area was blanketed by thick smoke and fog.

South Sumatra, along with Jambi and Riau are the three Indonesian provinces on Sumatra hardest hit by the thick acrid haze from widespread forest and ground fires on the island and in Borneo.

An Airbus A-300B4 of the national carrier Garuda Indonesia crashed in a smog hit area in North Sumatra on Sept. 26 as it was approaching the provincial capital of Medan.

All 234 people on board were killed.

2 Norwegians killed, 9 injured in Monaco helicopter crash

MONACO (AFP) — Two Norwegians were killed and nine injured in a helicopter crash late Friday near Monaco's heliport, authorities said here Saturday.

The Dauphin 360-C helicopter was on a shuttle service between Nice, Monaco, Cannes and St. Tropez by the firm Heli-Inter Riviera.

It came down on its final approach to the heliport around 6.00 p.m. A witness said it flipped over and crashed upside down into the sea.

Heliport employees threw themselves into the water to go to the aid of the passengers, some of whom managed to climb out of the cabin without help. The two dead were trapped inside the wrecked helicopter.

The cause of the accident was not known although the weather had been windy at the time.

Whales return to sea in N. Zealand

AUCKLAND (AFP) — Only 20 of a pod of 100 pilot whales which beached twice in a remote area in the far north of New Zealand this week have survived and headed out to sea, a conservation official said Saturday.

The 20 were from a group almost twice that number that beached at Karikari Bay early Friday morning following an initial stranding by 100 whales Wednesday.

A joint effort involving the Conservation Department, Project Jonah and volunteers saved about 50 whales from the first beaching but 40 returned Friday, apparently led by a pregnant female. The female whale was examined by scientists who decided she was stressed and likely to lead the others ashore again. She was killed humanely, and joined 19 other whales that died naturally after the second stranding.

The survivors were refloated at high tide Friday afternoon and were last seen at dusk clearing a nearby cape and surrounding islets and heading into the Pacific Ocean.

Brazil judge said to snub Clinton during visit

BRASILIA (R) — There was more fallout on Saturday from a diplomatic tiff between the United States and Brazil, with reports that the head of Brazil's supreme court planned to snub President Bill Clinton on his visit next week.

Newspapers said Celis De Melee — president of the Supreme Federal Tribunal (SFT) — would leave the capital Brasilia rather than attend a state banquet in honour of Mr. Clinton, who is due to begin a three-day trip to Brazil on Monday.

"The judge's gesture will be the main political snub for the U.S. president," the daily Correr Braziliense said. No one was available at the SFT on Saturday to confirm the report, which also appeared in several other newspapers.

Many Brazilians, who are traditionally sensitive to criticism from abroad, were outraged last week when a newspaper published excerpts of a report drawn up by the U.S. State Department which described corruption in Brazil as "endemic."

The report also criticised the justice system as inefficient and said the country's complicated multi-party political system lacked "ideological coherence."

Mr. Mello was one of the first senior officials to respond, saying the U.S. had no right to make such "simple" statements.

The U.S. embassy in Brasilia, which fuelled local anger by at first defending the report, announced that it would rewrite the passage relating to corruption, removing the word endemic.

There has also been widespread criticism in the Brazilian media of security measures taken by the U.S. to protect Mr. Clinton during his Oct. 13-15 stay.

Newspapers said Brazilian police had reluctantly agreed to allow U.S. Secret Service agents to use semi-automatic assault rifles when the president visits a Shantytown in Rio De Janeiro that is home to some heavily armed drug gangs.

But officials had refused to stop subway trains from passing along a track next to the sports centre where Mr. Clinton is due to meet residents of the Mangueira slum, including its famous Samba composers and singers.

A cartoon in the Folha De Sao Paulo newspaper depicted Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso being frisked by a special agent while other dark-suited security officials rummaged through his office.

Not everyone in Brazil agrees that the U.S. has been heavy-handed in the preparations for Mr. Clinton's visit.

"It is logical [Clinton] should want to guarantee his personal safety... given that in this third world country people have a habit of dying from stray bullets fired from who knows where," wrote respected columnist Fernando Rodrigues in Folha De Sao Paulo.

"They have drawn up a document saying that corruption in Brazil is endemic. Is that wrong? No, it is absolutely right," said Mr. Rodrigues.

Washington state governor in nostalgic return to ancestral home in Hong Kong

JILONG (AFP) — Washington State Governor Gary Locke Saturday returned to Hong Kong after paying an emotional visit to his ancestral home here for the first time.

Some 1,000 uniformed schoolchildren had lined the road to the small fish and rice farming village of Jilong, shouting "warm welcome" in English and playing musical instruments.

Mr. Locke and wife Mona stood through the sunroof of their limousine to wave back as they drove from the nearby city of Taishan, on the banks of the Pearl River in southern China.

"I was just completely overwhelmed by the thousands of people that were there, all the kids that were lining up along the road in the very bright colourful uniforms. I never expected anything like that. It's so totally overwhelming," he said on the journey back.

"I think a great number of the people in China are living under very tough conditions," he said.

"You could see that as we were driving the streets, and you could look into the shops and you could see all the different buildings where people live. We were going into, I think, areas of a typical China."

But he said the area had been specially cleaned for his visit.

"It was all cleaned up for us, but you can imagine under normal living circumstances, normal daily life, they [the streets] are filled with garbage and human waste.

"They don't have running water, they have a well. They don't even have flush toilets. These are the buildings in which my father and grandfather were born. Not much has changed.

"I sat in a chair in a room where my father was born, where he grew up and I just sat there and I was very quiet. I said 'hey, this is the place where he was born, where he was raised up like in 1916.' I got a strong nostalgic feeling."

More than 1,000 residents and officials had gathered in the village to greet Mr. Locke, the first Chinese state governor in the United States, as lion dancers performed.

"It's hard to imagine anyone living here," Mr. Locke said earlier after meeting some 70 members of his traditional clan in the house which hosted his parents' wedding banquet.

"It's like we are back in the 1800s," he said of the simple two-storey building, which was the same as tens of thousands of others across the region.

"The amazing thing is they are still living here today," added his American-born Chinese wife.

Trailed by some 300 cheerful villagers from Jilong and surrounding hamlets, he then went on to a house built by his great-grandfather before paying respects at the man's grave.

Mr. Locke and his family burnt incense, made an offering of a roast pig and bowed to the grave in a traditional ceremony.

Mr. Locke's grandfather went to the U.S. early this century to work as a houseboy in Washington state, he said.

Almost half of the 170 villagers here have relatives overseas, officials said, adding the settlement was established in 1715.

"Our villagers have a tradition of going overseas," said one woman, who was prevented from giving her name by Chinese officials.

"Whoever has the capability, be or she will definitely try to go.

"Of course, I came here today to see Gary Locke and his family members. It's a great day for him and for us."

Nine-year-old schoolboy Liu Shiliang added: "I was delighted to have a chance to see him. He's a famous person in Taishan. We're proud of him."

Mr. Locke was earlier given a warm welcome in Taishan city by more schoolchildren and a banner saying, "Welcoming Gary Locke's return to his hometown" at the ferry terminal where the governor, his entourage and some 60 journalists, photographers and cameramen arrived from neighbouring Hong Kong.

"This is a very special moment for myself, my wife, my parents and my brothers and sisters," he added, as his wife and eight other family members looked on.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1975

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The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times advertising department.

Powerful hint for Ottawa meeting

AWARDING THE Nobel Peace Prize this year to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) is a fitting recognition of the timely and dedicated efforts of ICBL to get rid of one of the most horrific threats to human life especially that of women and children. The international crusade against anti-personnel mines started in earnest in 1992 and picked up momentum as international awareness of the magnitude of the crisis grew stronger.

The realisation that there are still over 110 million anti-personnel mines scattered in some 64 countries ready to explode and take the life or maim unsuspecting civilians swiftly garnished international support. And when the late Princess Diana put her weight behind the mushrooming efforts to put an end to the carnage, international interest skyrocketed and became literally unstoppable.

Now we know that due to the widespread proliferation of the deployment of these mines, there is at least one human casualty every 22 minutes and 2,000 deaths attributed to mines every month. The crisis is exacerbated by the fact that it would take about $33 billion and 11 centuries at the current pace to dismantle the 110 million active mines.

The Nobel Prize jury has made the right decision, therefore, when it bestowed the 1997 prize on the ICBL and its coordinator Jody Williams. Only 15 organisations have received the coveted prize thus far as the normal practice is to accord this recognition and appreciation to individuals rather than institutions. The departure from the norm on this occasion is more than warranted and may set the stage for a repetition of a new tradition in prize decisions.

Yet the best prize that the international community can give to ICBL and all those who stand by it would be the early ratification of the International Treaty Against Landmines in Ottawa next December. Russia, China and the U.S. are the leading producers of landmines and their support to the treaty would truly usher in a new era against landmines and signal the start of an effective process to eliminate this scourge from the face of the Earth. Hopefully, the lingering reservations of these three producers on the need for an effective mechanism to begin the process of defusing the mines crisis would also be defused in time for the Ottawa meeting.

ABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Dustour's Kamal Rashid said Amman has experienced a taste of real joy and jubilation over the release of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin from an Israeli jail. Delight overwhelmed the Jordanian and the Palestinian people over the success of the treatment of Hamas politburo leader Khaled Misha'al after the aborted attempt on his life, the writer added. He said Palestinians and Jordanians were happy that Sheikh Yassin is back among his own people and family, once again assuming the leadership of his movement which is bent on liberating the Palestinian lands. But he said the great joy of the people on both sides of the Jordan River came to an abrupt end with reports about the release of the two Israeli agents who committed the assassination attempt on Misha'al. Jordanians and Palestinians were shocked to see Mossad agents trying to kill a citizen not in Israel or the occupied areas but in Jordan, Rashid said. He questioned how peace can endure between Israel and Jordan if it is respected only by one side and why should Jordan release the agents who might have information that can help us avert future dangers?

Arab Al Yawm's Mohammed Subeihi praised the government's move to attract investors from the Arab countries to invest in the Kingdom's development projects. Subeihi said any investment in the Kingdom is far more beneficial to the national economy than the former financial aid that used to come from the Arab countries. Singling out a recent visit to Jordan by a Kuwaiti private sector delegation who invested $200 million in the country's tourism industry, the writer said this investment succeeded due to the Jordanian private sector's endeavours, unlike the diplomatic efforts which since 1990 have not succeeded in restoring normal relations between Jordan and Kuwait. The writer said the investment is most likely to open the door for more investments by other countries in the Gulf region although some elements might still be working against the restoration of full relations. He said that because of the government's recent economic laws the Kingdom is now witnessing the dawn of economic progress.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

An American-Jordanian dialogue

Is America doing enough for Jordan?

AN ENVOY of the United States has some good news regarding American support to Jordan, coupled with a lot of advice on economic reform and political behaviour which is supposed to be in our own best interest.

Last Tuesday, the Jordanian Exporters Association invited leaders of the private sector to attend a lecture by Stuart Eizenstat, the U.S. under secretary of state for economic, business and agricultural affairs of the United States.

The American official spoke in detail about the various forms of U.S. economic, military, and technical assistance extended to Jordan. He also pointed out the course of action Jordan should take to reform its economy and push ahead with the peace process and joint projects, especially a Jordanian-Israeli industrial estate, and a joint airport at Aqaba.

No doubt, the U.S. supported Jordan politically. It gave the Kingdom the designation "non-NATO ally." It assisted Jordan financially by writing off its $700 million debt. American aid this year is said to reach $170 million. It may rise next year to $250 million.

All these facts are true and must be met with gratitude and appreciation. However, I ventured to tell the American diplomat that Jordanians are not satisfied. They can't help compare their share of American aid with those of Israel and Egypt, especially when Jordan is taking huge risks by signing a peace treaty with Israel, a step which breathed life into the peace process at a time when it was about to collapse.

Even the designation of "ally" is less than the specification given to Egypt "Partner in Peace" even though Jordan, unlike Egypt, has a warm peace with Israel. Indeed, Egypt's cold peace is gradually evolving into a cold war.

Jordan was willing to go the extra mile for peace, exceeding expectations. It spared no effort in implementing economic reform beyond the expectations of the International Monetary Fund. Yet the Jordanian people feel they have reaped no fruits to a better life, especially considering that 30 per cent of Jordanian families live below the poverty line, and 27 per cent of the country's manpower fail to find job opportunities and thus a promising future.

The American official told us about the open skies agreement the U.S. signed with Jordan, claiming that it will encourage tourism and air transport between the two countries. We told him that no American airline has so far taken advantage of the agreement and operated to Amman. The flights of the Royal Jordanian to U.S. cities are now less frequent than before the signing of the agreement.

He told us that America signed a treaty with Jordan to promote reciprocal investment. We told him that not a single American investor showed interest in investing in Jordan after signing that treaty, which changed nothing on ground.

Aside from all that, we asked the American official about reasons preventing the U.S. from granting Jordanian exports duty-free entry to the American market in line with Israeli and Palestinian exports? Why did Israel, in August, sign an understanding to use Aqaba airport on a trial basis as of Sept. 1, and to date no Israeli airplanes have landed there? Why does Jordan still has no access to the West Bank market despite peace? Why is Israel blocking the door-to-door arrangement which was agreed upon? Why does America fail to assign blame on the party endangering the peace process and causing the Palestinian economy to stagnate if not suffocate? And finally: Is America a partner in the Middle East peace process or simply a messenger and observer, ready to give its blessing to whatever the parties can agree upon?

Mr. Eizenstat's answers to all these questions were extremely diplomatic. The American official said he was happy to hear our concerns. That was why be was here, afterall. He reiterated the American pledge not to let Jordan down, and promised to do something to alleviate our problems and to respond positively to our needs. He told us that he will return next year and will then have something to say about all these issues, otherwise he may not face us again.

Let us hope that Mr. Eizenstat will indeed appear in Amman next year.

African unity, so far an unachievable goal

ARAB AND African nationalists tended to believe very much in regional unity. For the Arabs, the Arab League remains a beacon always reminding the Arabs that,without regional unity they will invariably find it difficult to peacefully, solve their regional problems. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) for Africans, is an offshoot of a dream which was almost achieved, but because of interference by external and internal forces. was not perused to its climax.

Below is an attempt to explain why tbe African nationalists' desire to forge unity among their states, turned out to be a nightmare — a political suicide. To understand the reasons behind this failure, let's open the annals of forty years ago.

So much has cbanged in Africa since independence. Considering the changes experienced in the contemporary world to date, the second generation of African leadership has emerged with a completely new way of thinking: less naive, more aggressive, and convinced that the future of Africa lies beyond the frontiers inherited from the European colonialists. Unlike the current generation of politicians, the African old guard grew up in a world divided by ideologies. And yet the first generation of nationalists was aware of its priorities.

Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia wrote to his supporters from prison telling them that "the battle remains the same. It is not anti-white but anti-wrong. We shall not fight against white racialists and be racialists ourselves at the same time." Nelson Mandela also wrote to his supporters along the same lines when he said "for my own part I have made my choice. I will not leave South Africa, nor will I surrender. Only through sacrifice and hardship and militant action can freedom be won. I will continue fighting for freedom until the end of my life." These words were spoken by people who had goals to achieve; people who were up to their moral and civic responsibilities.

In order to find a forum to manoeuvre in a divided cold world, the nationalists embraced African unity as a uniting goal through which all the African countries may rally and pioneer their future perspectives. A means through which they can fight external interference from foreign colonialists. They were however, divided over the interpretation of the kind of unity they wanted.

Some proposed economic unity, in the form of regional blocs, as they stand today in the east, south and in west Africa. Yet others were in favour of political unity, a view which was pioneered by Nkrumah and Nyerere. Then came the colonial cultural division of the continent into Francophone and Anglophone.

Some nationalists had their own dreams. Nkrumah of Ghana for one, advised his colleagues to "seek 'political kingdom,' and the rest will come by themselves."

Tome Moby of Kenya, a trade unionist and one of the young African radicals of his time, complained about social underdevelopment in the continent. To him, there was no social or cultural traffic between English and French-speaking Africa, the "culture imposed on us sticks like blur," he said.

Premier Lumumba of Congo, addressing a crowd in 1960, reminded his listeners that "we have suffered in our body and in our heart from colonial oppression. We are going to rule not by guns, but by peace of the heart and will." Lumumba did not live long enough to give his people that sort of peace. Indeed he was a victim of the rule of guns.

The late Felix Houghouet Boigny of the Ivory Coast did not think of unity as a solution to African problems. For him :"you cannot make a union between poor countries, unity would not make any of them richer."

Nyerere of Tanzania, saw no hope in Africa without political unity. For him "as long as separate African states exist, there will remain the danger that other states will exploit their differences for their purposes."

But the nationalists, despite their serious desire and commitment to regional unity, failed to address the problem of national sovereignty. When they met in Addis Ahaba in May 1963 to form the OAU, unity meant a different thing altogether for many of them. For most of them, it meant, on the part of the countries, the surrender of sovereignty; and on the part of the individual leaders, the surrender of high positions. In fact that was a big challenge for so many of them. At home, the African leaders had different domestic problems.

The nationalists inherited a continent rich in diversity and at the same time poor in resources (most of which were/are not exploited). It had approximately 1,500 tribal and ethnic communities divided among about 43 would-be states. The continent was composed of large countries like the Sudan, Nigeria, Zaire (DRC) and tiny states like the Gambia, Togo and Swaziland; more than 70 per cent of the population worked and continue to work in agriculture. Only 30 per cent of the continent is urban. Less than 9 per cent of the region is dry land or desert. There is a severe lack of trained and educated skilled personnel. It is tribally diverse and politically fragile. At independence, the population growth was the highest in the world. With poor health, low life expectancy, underdeveloped human resources, among other things, the nationalists found themselves, at home, using different regional vocabulary: "African mass poverty" instead of "African unity."

By late 1960s, the nationalists were unable to match the desire to promote the ideal of African unity on the one hand and the pressing economic and social problems in their states on the other. The first years of independence were therefore a confused period in the political lives of the nationalists.

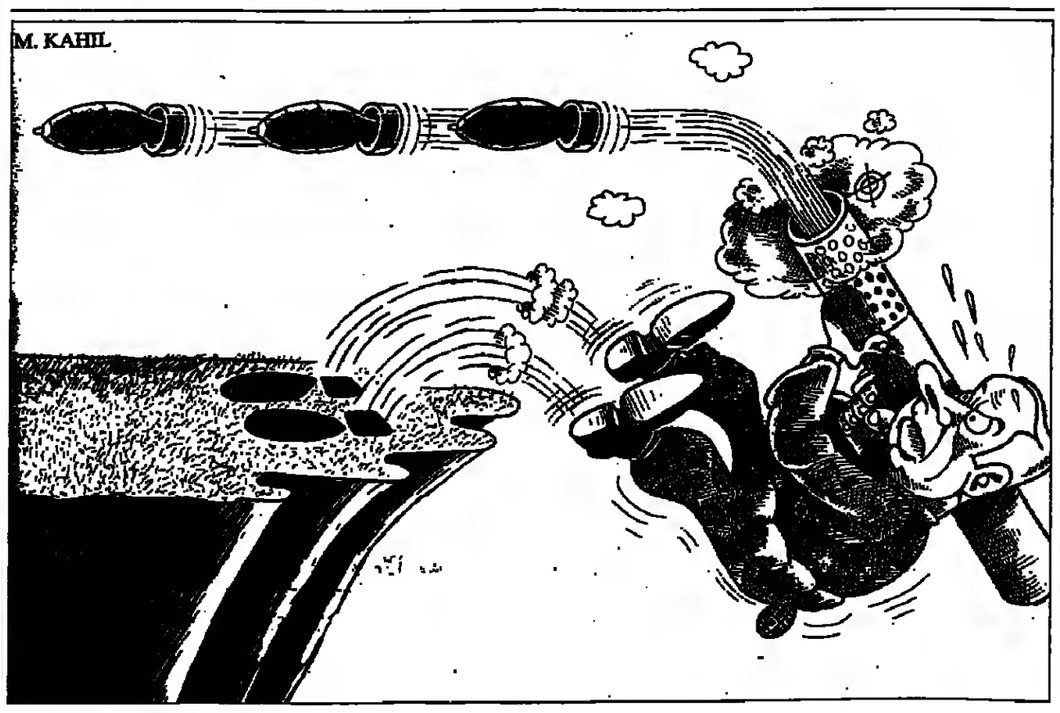
All convinced that some sort of African unity was necessary, two question sremained to bother most African nationalists: what kind of unity did they want to forge? And who should decide how to create the envisaged?" Looking retrospectively, it seemed that the nationalists lacked one of the essential ingredients of unity: That is, there bas to be something to integrate before the integration process can take place. Instead, most of the nationalists were acting like the nineteenth century British monarch who once cynically announced to an audience "we are all socialist now!"

Under pressure from outside, many nationalists found themselves declaring over the radio "we are all capitalists today" or whatever they had thought good for their people. Ironically, the nationalists soon discovered that the initial fervent desire to forge unity among their countries, genuine as it was, turned out to be political suicide and an economic nightmare. Some later realised the difficulty of working for unity among more than 40 states and working at the same time to subdue more than 40 tribal groups at home. The end result was that the colonial powers, who were supposed to have left the continent permanently, worked against those who were serious in seeing that African unity was achieved. These colonial powers saw to it that most, if not all the nationalists, were replaced by pro-colonial military officers and one-party oriented politicians. And that was how achievement of African unity was aborted only to remain a wishful symbolic dream embodied in what is now called the OAU. Can some lessons be learned from the first generation struggle?

By John Gay Yoh

Visiting fellow of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies
Amman

M. KAHIL



LETTERS

Poverty is painful

To the Editor:

I THINK, occasionally, everyone of us stops at a traffic light, only to find him/herself surrounded by children begging for money. To me those children suffer daily, and must feel humiliated, when a fancy car stops and its driver ignores their presence, or even rebukes them for begging.

These children are treated as inferiors, not as equal human beings; their misfortune dominates their lives. Many people treat them in a way that makes me want to cry when I look at them. When those people treat them in such a way, I am sure they are ignorant of how many people live below the poverty line in Jordan, and how many people go hungry with no food for days, or do not even have a roof over their heads.

Whenever I give those children money, my gesture is met with a rebuff from whoever is with me. People say the government provides shelters for those people, and we should not encourage such acts (begging).

Do you think those shelters are good? I don't think they are as warm in the winter as our homes, or provide nutritious food needed for these children's growth as our food does.

I really think eliminating poverty as a whole is difficult, but trying to reduce it is not far-fetched.

If we all try sharing what God bad bestowed on us with others who are less fortunate in life, I am sure some change will be seen.

Jomana Wael Karadsheh
Amman

Tourists want to feel, not see, the pyramids

By Eileen Alt Powell
The Associated Press

CAIRO — At night, long after most tourists have left the pyramids, the tombs of Egypt's ancient pharaohs echo with the chanting, dancing and praying of travellers seeking a touch of the psychic.

They are coming in increasing numbers — often carrying oils to anoint themselves or crystals to measure the spiritual power of the great monuments. They want to feel the pyramids rather than to see them.

"It's a spiritual journey to the source of all original wisdom," said Jill Vander Veen, 48, a calligrapher from Johannesburg, South Africa, after meditating in the burial chamber of the great pyramid.

The granite crypt is at the end of a steep wooden ramp. The air is dank and still. Even a whisper resonates off the stone walls and empty sarcophagus of the Pharaoh Cheops. The darkness is so complete that those centimetres apart can't see each other.

Yet in this void, Ms. Vander Veen and others describe mystical experiences — brilliant flashes of light, strange voices from far away, a sense of supernatural forces moving around them.

These spiritual visitors are the heaviest users of Egypt's "Rent-a-Pyramid" programme, which gives tour groups after-hours access to the pharaonic tombs at a cost of $600 for three hours.

Some 5,000 people bought time last year, and even more are expected to this year.

The archaeologists responsible for the great pyramids at the Giza plateau on Cairo's western edge have mixed feelings about the trend.

"People like to dream, and they want to tie their dreams to the most important symbols of the ancient world," says Zahi Hawass, the supervisor at Giza. "We're willing to accommodate that."

But Mr. Hawass and other Egyptologists are disturbed that many of the spiritualists are being drawn by "New Age" theorists who seem bent on rewriting the history of ancient Egypt.

Archaeologists say the Giza pyramids were laboriously built with primitive tools by Egyptian workers for pharaohs Cheops, Chephren and Mycerinus about 4,500 years ago. Some New Agers contend they are far older.

For example, European writers Robert Bauval and Graham Hancock have a theory that the three pyramids line up with the stars in the belt of the constellation Orion as they appeared in the night sky 10,500 years ago.

They postulate that the pyramids are the work of a lost civilisation — which perhaps left its wisdom concealed in the great structures.

"They are trying to steal our history," Mr. Hawass shouts when asked about these theories.

"We have found no evidence of any lost civilisation," he says. "Everything around the pyramids dates it to the 4th dynasty in 2500 B.C. — the pottery, the tombs of the workers, the tools we've found. Everything."

Mr. Hawass and New Age author John Anthony West of Athens, New York, have had bitter exchanges about the ancient monuments on the very modern medium of the Internet.

Mr. West accuses the American-educated archaeologist of blocking research that might challenge traditional scholarship and calls him a scorpion. "Hawass belittles West and his supporters as 'pyramidiots'."

Mr. West has a much-disputed theory that the Sphinx at Giza is also far older than believed. He says the weathering of the stones was not due to wind and sand, but to heavy rain and floods the likes of which haven't hit the Egyptian desert since about 9000 B.C.

An organiser of meditation sessions in the pyramids, Mr. West says his followers find in Egypt "the source of unparalleled art and architecture generated by a profound and sacred science we are only just beginning to understand."

The modern-day spiritualists are following in the footsteps of people drawn for centuries by the power of Egypt's ancient religion, with its intriguing gods and promise of a rich afterlife.

Astrologists have tried to depict the great pyramids' shafts and tunnels as guides to the stars. Mathematicians have developed sophisticated "maps" of the world based on the monuments.

Rainer Stadelmann, head of the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo, sees the new theories as "just more pseudo-science" echoing old ideas.

"It comes like a flu," he said, "and after 10 years, goes away."

Tour guide Mohammad Abdel-Razak doesn't get excited about how New Agers view Egypt, even those who think they once lived as Cleopatra, the Pharaoh Ramses II, temple priestesses — even ancient gods.

"They love Egypt, they come and they spend money," he says. "Why shouldn't we be nice to them?"

Samuelson's argument still holds true

By Jonathan Davis

TIME PASSES and the caravan of luminaries in the world of finance and economics moves on with it. How widely, I wonder, does the name of Paul Samuelson still resonate among those under the age of 35? This wise and feisty man, once described with feeling by a contemporary as "a human mainframe," has good claim, along with his great rival, Milton Friedman, to have been the most influential economist of the post-war period.

In a career that has left virtually no corner of economics untouched, he was the man who first took the philosophies of Keynes and propagated them far and wide across the world. He was the first American economist to win the Nobel Prize for economics and wrote what proved to be the standard textbook on economics for a whole generation of students.

Samuelson's work has covered so many different subjects — his collected works run to six volumes and more than 400 academic papers — that it is easy to overlook his contribution in specific fields.

As it happens, one of the areas where he has had the greatest influence is in investment. As an admirer of Keynes, who was a noted speculator as well as a professional economist, he was one of the first economists to try and understand why markets should behave in the way that they do. A paper he wrote in the 1960s, dryly entitled "Proof That Properly Anticipated Prices Fluctuate Randomly," was the basis of what has since come to be known as the concept of efficient markets.

This is the notion that competition is such in large and well capitalised stock markets that it is difficult for anyone, even professional investors, to make consistent excess returns from them, excess returns in this context meaning higher returns than the market averages, after allowing for the different degrees of risk adopted. He later summed up his philosophy as "no easy pickings, no sure thing gains."

When Samuelson first propounded this potentially radical idea, it was greeted with astonishment, bordering on outrage, on Wall Street, which was hardly a surprise when you begin to think through the implications. Never one to want to avoid making waves if the opportunity arose, Samuelson himself concluded in a 1974 article that the best thing most professional fund managers could do was to pack their bags and go home. But, as a pragmatist, who like Keynes has always liked to dabble in the markets himself, he also had some serious advice for ordinary investors.

Paul Samuelson

This was that the best thing they could do, once they had decided to invest in equities in the first place, was to put the bulk of their money into a low-cost index-tracking fund. He has long been a fan of the Vanguard Group, a fund management company which sells exactly such index-tracking funds to millions of American investors and has compiled a consistent above-average performance.

The line of reasoning is an argument which I believe holds as broadly true today in general as it did when Samuelson first propounded it. It does not mean, as Jason Hathorn, a director of the specialist fund management group Buchanan Partners has kindly pointed out to me, that there are a number of ways in which investors cannot still hope to add value by adding a slice of active management on top of their basic indexed portfolio.

One of the arguments for investing in a professionally managed European or emerging markets fund, for example, is that there are good grounds for believing that other markets are not yet as efficient as the U.K. and United States and therefore that it will still be possible to find profitable pricing anomalies there.

Like Barclays Global Investors, Buchanan Partners believes that it is possible to use quantitative stock selection methods to exploit specific areas of inefficiency in the U.K. market. Their track record to date suggests that they may well be right, although how long these particular anomalies will persist is something which is by definition unknowable.

Samuelson would not disagree. In two recent articles for the Journal of Portfolio Management, he looked back on the 30 or so years of research that has been carried out since he first started developing the efficient markets hypothesis. His conclusion is that, while many individual anomalies have been shown to exist, the "jury of history" has failed to find "systematic inefficiency that exercisers of judgement could use to achieve excess risk-corrected returns." In other words, nobody has yet succeeded in disproving the basic thrust of the efficient markets concept.

Note that Samuelson's argument now, as before, is not that it is impossible for some professional fund managers to achieve excess returns. He explicitly allows the possibility that a handful of exceptionally talented individuals, such as Warren Buffett, can outperform the market on a consistent basis, though most will not, partly because they tend to trade too much and fritter away some of their gains in high dealing costs.

His case has always been that such exceptional investing talents will normally use their talent to make money for themselves, rather than rent themselves out to others; and that it is difficult and/or expensive for ordinary investors to take advantage of such talents even if they are able to identify them.

One thing that tends to happen, for example, is that most of the excess returns that the good managers achieve are simply absorbed by the higher fees that the managers with the best records are able to charge. This is one reason why the unit trusts with the best performance records tend also to be the ones with the highest initial charges and often the highest annual charges as well. As an ordinary investor, you pay for what you get, but what you get, quite often, once you total up the costs, is not worth paying for, compared with what you get from indexing.

The Independent

That serpent of old Nile

Book Review

The Memoirs of Cleopatra
By Margaret George
St. Martin's, 964pp. $27.95

ILLUSTRATION BY JILL KARLA SCHWARZ

THREE CENTURIES ago, Blaise Pascal suggested that if Cleopatra's nose had been shorter, the whole face of the world would now be different. More recently, various Afrocentric groups have presumptuously tried to claim that Cleopatra was in fact a black woman — ridiculous; her family was originally Macedonian Greek.

The reader is bound to find the early pages of this novel somewhat confusing. Because of the paucity of family and given names at that time, there are some half-a-dozen female Cleopatras and male Ptolemies for us to sort out, as they engage in palace intrigues, conspiracies and cabals. However, as the extraneous ones gradually get disposed of by one means or another, "our" Cleopatra eventually comes to the fore, and the bulk of the story is hers.

A thrilling story it is, and we develop considerable sympathy for her successes, trials and tribulations, but I can't say that she ever becomes really lovable. George seems to have been at least subtly influenced by Elizabeth Taylor's portrayal of the character — beautiful, artful, ambitious, by turns flirtatious minx, temptress, seductress, murderess, competent queen, towering intellect (at one point, she learns to read and speak Latin fluently in a month; I would call that impossible) but unfortunately with not a trace of a sense of humour.

Though Cleopatra is technically — in the Egyptian tradition — "married" to one and another of her Ptolemy brothers, she saves her virginity for Julius Caesar — albeit he is 52 years old, balding, epileptic and has innumerable other "alternative wives," not to mention his genuine and long-suffering spouse, Calpurnia. Caesar is clearly the one true love of Cleopatra's life and, for us readers, the most engaging character in the novel. As well he should be; he gave Rome an empire that extended from Britain through Gaul, Spain, Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Crete to the shores of the Levant. His writings were famous in their time and are still widely quoted. He gave the Western world its first really workable calendar. After his death, the Romans elevated him to godhood and renamed one of their months for him.

George adheres to some of the old legends — Cleopatra introducing herself to the otherwise unapproachable Caesar by rolling herself inside a gift carpet, her bathing in asses' milk — and even makes them believable. The author also has the courage to correct some other old legends. Towards the end of the novel, Cleopatra does not wanly and vaporishly commit suicide by clasping an asp to her bosom. Instead, she realistically employs the far more lethal royal hooded cobra.

Anyway, Caesar is immediately smitten with her and whisks her off to Rome for a two-year stay as his acknowledged mistress. His subjects have never seemed to mind his other peccadilloes, but they mightily resent Cleopatra. She is "foreign," so she is shunned by both high society and the common folk, forced to live rather forlornly, ignored in one of Caesar's villas. On her arrival at Rome — and Rome at that period was a boondocks compared to her own urbane and sophisticated Alexandria — Caesar takes her on a tour of the place: Old and New Forums, the Circus Maximus, temples to this and that god.

Whenever Cleopatra is logistically able to be "on the scene," so to speak, the author does an admirable job of evoking the place, the times, the local life: chariot races, gladiatorial contests, triumphal parades, voluptuous feasts and the like. However, Cleopatra can seldom accompany Caesar or her own generals on their many wars and campaigns of conquest, so these must be pallidly conveyed to her (and us) by way of conversations, gossip, dispatches and letters. Even Caesar's assassination has to be handled the same way (no "Et tu, Brute!").

Because many of the wars, civil wars and provincial uprisings employ the age-old military "hurry up and wait" technique, there are fallow patches where the opponents may sit simply glowering at each other for a year or so. But George superbly unearths, recreates or invents anecdotes, dialogues and adventures to fill in the gaps. Still, we do not get to experience the day-to-day horror of warfare until the culminating (and Egypt-crushing) four-month Battle of Actium, when Cleopatra insists on being at least a figurehead commander and sails there in her famous flagship: gilded inside and out, purple-sailed, silver-oared, festooned with fancy lanterns.

The author's research is awesome; she seems to know every detail of the foods, costumes and customs of Egypt, Rome and their colonies. She even includes a plausible explanation of the Jews' much earlier "parting of the waters" of the Reed (not Red) Sea. She does, however, sometimes fudge on details we might like to know more about. People are forever lighting oil lamps in dark rooms or torches in dark streets, as casually as if they were flicking their Bics. How did they do it? Curiously, too, for all her notorious love life, Cleopatra's memoirs are prissily modest and not at all titillating about her sexual encounters. He "made love to me" is about as sexy as it gets.

The novel fairly weeps with betrayals. Though the ageing Caesar is ecstatic when Cleopatra bears him a son, Caesarion, he never publicly acknowledges the child as his own. And, after Caesar's death, his will makes no mention of or provision for Caesarion. Caesar's whole fortune and the succession to the governance of Rome are bequeathed to his extremely unlikeable nephew Octavian and that one's odious wife, Fulvia. For her part, Cleopatra is already prepared to find a replacement for Caesar, if necessary. While he still lives and "makes love" to her, she is casting admiring sidewise glances at the muscular virility of young Marc Antony.

In the final analysis, whatever the length of her nose, Cleopatra actually had little participation in all the epochal events of those years. They simply happen to have happened during her lifetime, and her chief distinction was being the focus of the Romans' hatred, for her having "unmanned" (or certainly "unRomaned") first Caesar, then Antony. Caesar's own death, not hers, was far more significant in changing "the whole face of the world." All that her suicide accomplished was an end to the Ptolemaic dynasty and the diminution of Egypt from a world power and cultural centre to the status of a mere "breadbasket" province of Rome. Yet it is she, dead at 39, still beautiful, who has most entranced us down all the centuries since. Her "memoirs" are vivid and enthralling. Read them.

Gary Jennings
The Washington Post

Regulations concerning issuing, registering securities to be enforced from Thursday

Hafez predicts Kingdom to register 5% growth in '97

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan's debts to other countries and financial institutions now stand at around $6.5 billion but the Kingdom's financial situation is quite sound, Finance Minister Suleiman Hafez announced Saturday.

Speaking to the media following a regular Cabinet session, Mr. Hafez said the soundness of the economy reflects the fact that the Kingdom is applying the economic restructuring programme agreed with the International Monetary Fund in a very precise manner.

As a result of the careful implementation of the reform programme, the minister predicted this year's economic growth to be around five per cent and the budget deficit to be at 3.1 per cent.

The implementation of the economic restructuring programme which started in 1989 will end in 1998 but that does not mean that the government will stop addressing imbalances in the national economy, Mr. Hafez stressed.

Mr. Hafez said the Cabinet reviewed the country's financial policy and its impact on the preparation of the 1998 fiscal budget. He indicated that the draft budget will be ready next week and will be referred to the Council of Ministers for approval.

Referring to the privatisation process, he said the government has finalised a mechanism for the privatisation of the Jordan Telecommunications Company and that shares of the company will be offered to the public before the end of this year.

Also before the end of this year, 23 per cent of the government's shares in the Jordan Cement Factories Company will be sold to the private sector, added the minister. He revealed that the government has disposed of all its shares in companies where its equity did not exceed five per cent.

JSC Chairman Marto (centre) addressing the press conference

Meanwhile, Michel Marto, chairman of the Jordan Securities Commission (JSC) announced Saturday that regulations concerning issuing and registering securities will be enforced as of Oct. 16. He told a press conference that these regulations organise all matters regarding Jordan's capital market. The regulations provide details about issuing securities under the supervision of the JSC.

Asian economist warns currency crisis could last two years

HONG KONG (AFP) — The currency crisis which has rocked South East Asia for the past months could last for up to two years and even get worse, a senior Hong Kong-based banker has warned.

William Overholt, Asian research director with Bankers Trust Company in Hong Kong, said the region was experiencing a "bubbles crisis."

"Japan was the first to go through it, Thailand has a huge real estate crisis, Korea a chaebol (industrial conglomerates) bubble, Indonesia an industry bubble and everywhere there is a banking bubble," he said.

"The problem is going to be a lot bigger, reality is just sinking in ... the speculation will come back and back and back until the bubbles are gone," he added.

Mr. Overholt predicted it may take 18 months to two years for governments to put in place measures to tempt back investors and enable the situation to stabilise.

But he warned the crisis could last even longer if those countries affected did not learn from the example of Japan which "tried to postpone the pain and ended prolonging the problem ... Japan still has a problem, seven years after."

What was needed was American-style management such as seen in the U.S. savings banks crisis in the 1980s when "assets have been marked to market, banks went down, owners and managers lost their jobs and their money."

"The pain was awful but the crisis was over and the U.S. economy never stopped growing ever since," he said

Last week, the battered Malaysian ringgit staged a stunning recovery and the Indonesian rupiah also treaded higher but analysts warned the upside was limited as factors stoking regional foreign exchange turmoil persisted.

The Thai baht, however, closed lower as investors were sidelined ahead of a government announcement on Thailand's ailing financial sector while the Philippine central bank directly intervened in the market to check a peso fall.

Mr. Overholt who is also an specialist in Chinese affairs said he was more optimistic about developments in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

"The Chinese got a big bubble that is called the SOEs (state-owned entreprises) and a banking bubble," he said, adding that China's economic czar Zhu Rongji, tipped as future premier, had succeeded in only a few years in bringing down inflation from 22 per cent to just two.

Hong Kong remained vulnerable though because of property speculation.

"This property bubble is going to be deflated, if not by foreign speculators, then by local people getting angry," he said

"There is going to be real social pain, it will affect people's willingness to buy property, it will lower the prices and affect the stock market," he added.

Gulf states, EU make headway in drawing up free trade pact

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab Gulf states and the European Union (EU), their main economic partner, have made headway on a planned free trade zone and an agreement could be initialled in 1998, officials have said.

The two sides ironed out most of their differences at two rounds of negotiations this year and agreed to hold three more rounds in 1998, the official United Arab Emirates (UAE) daily Al Bayan reported.

It quoted unidentified Gulf officials as saying progress was achieved after the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states edged closer to setting up a customs union, a prerequisite set by the EU for their free trade pact.

"At their talks in Riyadh, the GCC and the EU delegates discussed the draft free trade agreement and the EU agreed on most modifications sought by the GCC," it said.

"Preparations will be discussed this year for three new rounds of talks between the two sides in 1998 as they agreed to ink that accord next year," Al Bayan added.

Sources at the Riyadh-based GCC said the two partners had removed more than 80 per cent of the hurdles blocking a free trade agreement, under discussion for more than 10 years.

Such issues as more EU investment in the Gulf, the environment and customs tariffs will be settled at the coming talks.

"There is large progress in our negotiations for a free trade accord. We have presented a report to the EU about the progress that we have made in our efforts to unify customs tariffs in the GCC," one source told AFP.

"The EU has responded favourably to our clarifications but stressed again that we should bridge all gaps in our tariffs. I think the customs union project will be ready this year and will be presented to the EU," he said.

The EU has repeatedly told GCC countries they must unify their widely varied tariffs before it signs the free trade pact, which the GCC has sought in a bid to boost exports to the EU and attract industrial technology.

GCC states, which control nearly 45 per cent of the world's recoverable oil reserves, argue such a pact is justified because they do not impose tariffs on most EU products and want reciprocal treatment.

But the EU has voiced fears that removal of duties on Gulf petrochemicals and other exports altogether could result in dumping European markets with cheap products and threaten the EU's independent petrochemical industry.

The two sides agreed in 1994 on a gradual removal of the tariffs but the EU said more negotiations were needed before a pact is finalised.

The absence of a free trade agreement has combined with lower oil prices and a sharp rise in EU exports to the Gulf to upset the trade balance between the two sides.

From a large surplus in favour of the GCC in the early 1980s, the balance sharply tilted in favour of the EU, which had a surplus in the trade of goods and services of around $10.9 billion in 1995.

HOROSCOPE

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1997

ARIES

(March 21 to April 19) It is a good day to contact far off friends and relatives and discuss plans with them. If you think a trip will be wise, plan it at this time. Later this evening will be good for going out on the town with your mate.

TAURUS

(April 20 to May 20) Make business plans early today by completing a new project. Later this evening have a talk with your mate which you have been postponing. Stop procrastinating with your career activities and thereby you can be successful.

GEMINI

(May 21 to June 21) Keep your associations productive today by stating your aims clearly to a bigwig who can be quite helpful. Keep contact with those who are of greatest help to you and thereby you can gain the recognition you seek.

MOON CHILDREN

(June 22 to July 21) You can spend time today labouring instead of devising methods of operation for your career activities. Stay busy, this evening and make the most of the cooperative spirit which prevails with you and your loved ones.

LEO

(July 22 to August 21) Focus on utilising talents, so that today plans should be put to work. Try to improve your health, thereby you won't miss and time from career activities. Show affection to others who have made a difference in your life.

VIRGO

(August 23 to September 22) Get busy early today realising promises made to your loved ones on previous days. Later this will be a good time to spend time relaxing with charming, helpful friends who can make your career activities more successful.

LIBRA

(September 23 to October 22) Send out many messages today and you should not let friends forget you. Also labour on papers and reports and verify their accuracy. You should not stay alone tonight, so make plans to meet with fellow associates.

SCORPIO

(October 23 to November 21) Use your astute sense this week to keep watch on financial affairs, and gain advantageous position. Watch those whom you consider successful and pattern your actions, thereby you can gain the prosperity which you seek.

SAGITTARIUS

(November 22 to December 21) Today, throw your uncommonly high energy into business and meet with knowledgeable people who have some excellent suggestions. Concentrate on honest methods of operation. Take good care of health concerns.

CAPRICORN

(December 22 to January 20) Be assertive with higher-ups, and don't be afraid to communicate with them. Try to be more attentive to your mate later this evening and show him or her the attention which he or she seeks and can bring you great results.

AQUARIUS

(January 21 to February 19) Today you will receive some well-deserved recognition from friends and fellow associates. Get together for a party later this evening and invite many people, you should be the perfect host towards all these people.

PISCES

(February 20 to March 20) Today there is potential to meet powerful individuals who can be quite helpful if you use tact and diplomacy. Later this evening you can handle credit matters carefully and thereby you can gain the recognition from superiors.

FOR RENT

Unique, furnished semi-villa in Khilda, near Al-Durr-Al-Manthoor Schools.
Telephone line available.
Please call 5533151/5511321

Ultra Deluxe Furnished Apartment
Excellent Location in Abdoun
With nice panoramic views
3BR unit master, 3 Toilets, Fully equipped, Brand new, 220 SQM, Telephone & complete satellite sys, Private garages & Storage area.
Tel. 55 21 391 / Mobile 30599

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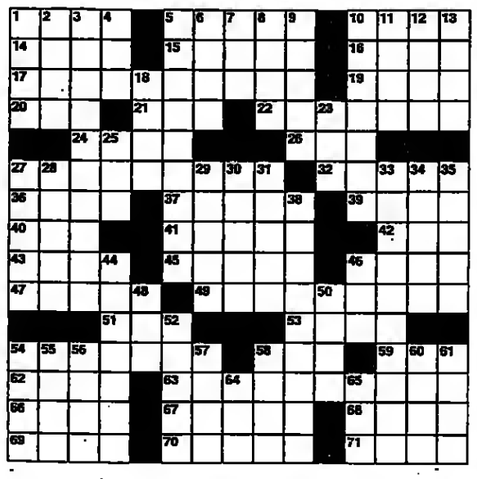
Each apartment area 220 sq.m., in second and third floor. Consisting of three bedrooms, two bathrooms, guest room, spacious living room, veranda, independent central heating, telephone, maid room, modern equipped kitchen and luxurious furniture.
Please call Tel.: 665711 — Fax: 664256

THE Daily Crossword



ACROSS
1 Biblical weed
5 Small map
10 Molten rock
14 Racecourse
15 — Dame
16 Sere
17 NASA fliers
19 Examples
20 Sign
21 State: abbr.
22 Flashing lights
24 Always
26 Over there
27 Fletcher Christian, et al.
32 Dries
36 Article
37 Indolence
39 Ringlet
40 Ascot
41 Shinbone
42 — bono
43 Beige
45 Task
46 Predicament
47 Files
49 Orville and Wilbur
51 Kit
53 Coming
54 Unskillful
58 Haggard novel
59 Hellenic letter
62 Luau entertainment
63 Martin and Damone
66 Winglike
67 Charged particle
68 Make ready, briefly
69 Defeat
70 Mount
71 Inquires

DOWN
1 Convex moldings
2 English river
3 Some criminals
4 Wapiti
5 Holds the attention
6 Carol
7 Sault — Marie
8 Goes astray
9 Cross
10 Sparing of words
11 Saudi
12 Clamp
13 Coolers
18 Elysium
23 Brawl
25 Get-up-and-go
27 Joint
28 New York city
29 Choice
30 Songbird
31 Smart
33 Marionette manipulators
34 Slip
35 Coin collectors
38 Humbly
44 Snip
46 Gender
48 Spot
50 Indigence
52 Band instruments
54 Melville captain
55 Stubborn one
56 Too bad!
57 Rail
58 Plum
60 Journey
61 Vipers
64 Rest
65 Govt. gp.

O	L	E	G		F	O	R	G	E		P	R	I	M
L	O	L	A		A	R	E	N	A		A	O	N	E
A	G	A	R		B	E	A	U	R	E	G	A	R	D
F	O	L	D	E	R	O	L			R	E	N	E	E
			E	R	A	E		T	B	A	R			
C	H	A	N	E	Y		D	R	E	E	E	E	R	D
H	O	M	E			T	R	I	T	E		X	A	T
E	M	I	R		T	E	E	T	H		G	E	N	E
E	E	N		F	I	R	S	T			U	R	G	E
P	R	O	G	R	E	E	S		E	K	A	T	E	R
			R	U	D	E		A	P	E	R			
L	A	N	A	I			B	L	E	N	D	E	R	D
A	V	A	N	T	G	A	R	D	E		I	R	A	E
P	E	N	N		I	V	I	E	D		A	I	N	T
P	R	A	Y		L	E	E	R	Y		N	E	T	S

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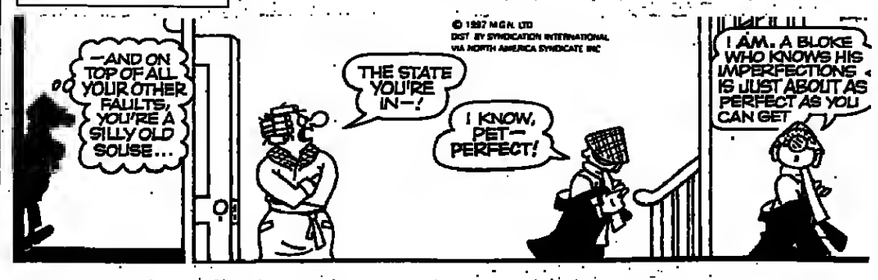
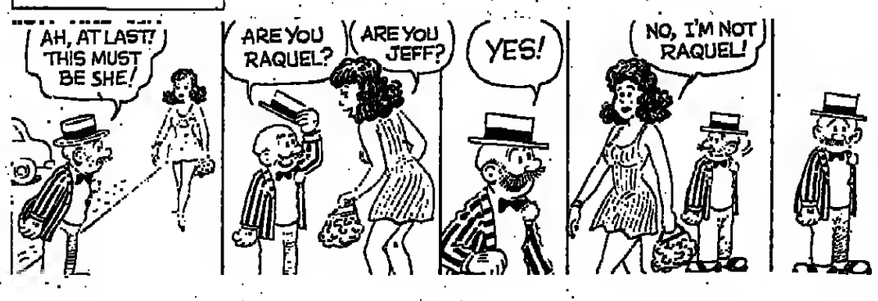
Peanuts

Andy Capp

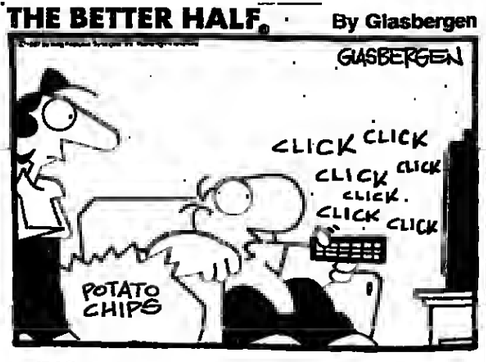


Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF

By Glasbergen



"When I'm quiet, you complain that I never talk to you. When I talk, you call me a poor listener!"

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

SWENY

ALCAN

REMMOY

CATATH

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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here :

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: COWER SUITE BOILED SKEWER
Answer: What the author ended up with when he played football – WRITER'S BLOCK

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic

Ministry begins paying cash subsidy for wheat to beneficiaries from the private sector

**STARTING TODAY (Sunday), the Ministry of Finance will begin handing the fifth payment of cash subsidy for wheat which costs the treasury around JD51 million a year. The payments will cover the last five months of this year and will be given to private sector beneficiaries who can receive the cash subsidy from 750 centres spread throughout the Kingdom.

The payment will be JD1.280 per month for each person and will cover the months of August until the end of the year, the minister of finance said noting that the cash distribution process will continue for a whole month. Replying to questions from journalists during a tour of the centre carrying out checking procedures, the minister emphasised the need to merge all the parties concerned with paying the subsidies. He said the Ministry of Finance will study a plan, in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry, Trade and supply, to formulate a clear joint approach on merging the parties concerned with paying cash subsidies.

The minister stressed that the government is continuing to implement the mechanism of paying the cash subsidies for the citizens without any exceptions or changes on this mechanism. He explained that the names of beneficiaries registered were those mentioned on the payment lists which were printed earlier at the Ministry of Finance. The lists, which were sent to payment centres (branch of a bank or a post office), include the full name, the national code number, the number of beneficiaries and the amount of cash subsidy that should be paid.

The lists were prepared at the highest level of accuracy, the minister said, adding that the centres will be operating daily from 7:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. every day except Thursday afternoon. "The distribution centres have raised their preparedness to the 'A' level, which is the highest degree of alertness," the minister said. He added that the centres were equipped with telephone and facsimile lines to respond to any complaint or problem facing the public. "A decision has been taken to answer any query within five minutes from receiving it," he stressed (Al Dustour + Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq).

China seeks to widen economic, business relations with Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — A delegation representing the Chinese International Trade Board Saturday beld talks with Jordanian officials and businessmen and said China wishes to develop its economic relations with Jordan to be at par with the excellent ties on the political level.

Delegation leader Kio Yushan told Jordanian officials from the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Supply, and members from the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce and the Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA) that the Chinese delegation is exploring opportunities for investment in order to bolster economic and business ties, especially in industry, tourism and transport sectors.

"Through this visit, we try to explore all scopes for wide cooperation between our two countries and to meet with businessmen as well as try to solve trade-related problems and the delay in the arrival of goods," Mr. Yushan said.

The Chinese delegation outlined the developments in the Chinese economy over the past few years noting that China bas adopted the open market economy. He indicated that the Arab-Chinese Cbamber of Commerce will hold a general conference in Amman next year in order to explore wider scopes of Sino-Arab economic cooperation.

The ministry's secretary general, Mohammad Halaiqa, outlined the areas where investment can be made and the incentives and privileges offered to the investors who can acquire up to 100 per cent of projects.

He explained the government's policy of privatising institutions pointing out that the private sector is given the leading role in the national economy.

He also outlined that Jordan is planning to carry out projects in railways, water, tourism and mineral sectors.

Federation Chairman Haidar Murad invited Chinese businessmen to invest in the country and to carry out joint ventures.

JBA President Hamdi Tabbaa pointed out that Jordan's exports to China have been declining while Chinese exports to Jordan are increasing.

He called on the Chinese to take steps to adjust the balance of trade between the two countries through increased purchases from Jordan, especially phosphate, potash, fertilisers and medicines, to Chinese markets

According to Mr. Tabbaa, Jordanian exports to China dropped from JD 17 million in 1993 to JD7 million in 1996 while China's exports to the Kingdom rose from JD38 million in 1992 to JD51 million in 1996.

Mr. Tabbaa announced that a JBA delegation will visit China in the coming year to explore new markets for Jordanian products and to look for joint investment opportunities.

He said that the JBA wishes to establish a China-Jordan business council in order to promote economic and trade links with China.

Lebanese businessmen in Baghdad to open trade fair

BAGHDAD (R) — A large delegation of Lebanese businessmen and industrialists is in Baghdad seeking trade under Iraq's oil-for-food deal with the United Nations, a government newspaper said Saturday.

Al Iraq paper said a team of officials representing Lebanese ministries of industry, agriculture, economy and tourism was conducting talks with Iraqi counterparts on means to expand trade between the two countries.

The paper said the team of Lebanese officials was joined Friday by more than 200 Lebanese businessmen who would open a trade fair in Baghdad exhibiting Lebanese products.

The fair will be the first in Bagbdad since Beirut severed ties with Iraq in 1994 over the murder of an Iraqi dissident in the Lebanese capital.

Lebanon cut diplomatic relations with Iraq over the incident after charging Iraqi diplomats with the assassination of the dissident.

About 100 private Lebanese companies are expected to take part in the exhibition. The organisers, according to Al Iraq, will sell exhibits including cooking oil, soaps, clothes, detergents, watches and pesticides direct to visitors.

The organisers hope to strike deals with Iraqi traders within the framework of Iraq's oil deal with the United Nations for goods like washing machines, electrical pumps, printing materials as well as medical and veterinary equipment, the paper said.

The deal, which took effect last December, allows Iraq to sell $2 billion of oil every six months to buy humanitarian goods. Iraqis have been hard-hit by U.N. sanctions imposed for Baghdad's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Last week a 12-member Iraqi delegation, headed by the Chairman of Iraq's Chamber of Commerce Adnan Al Qudis was in Lebanon and held meetings with Lebanese officials and visited Lebanese factories.

ARAB BANK EXTENDS AVAILABILITY OF CAPITAL GUARANTEED FUND

ARAB BANK bas announced it is to extend the availability of its recently launched Capital Guaranteed Fund in Jordan and Lebanon until 27 October due to heavy demand from investors. The Fund, due to close on 13 October, will remain open for an additional two weeks to give investors a further opportunity to participate in the Fund. Arab Bank has launcbed a new Capital Guaranteed Fund across the Middle East, to five investors the opportunity of investing in a fund that guarantees the security of their capital, whilst providing potentially higher returns than traditional deposit and savings accounts. The new Capital Guaranteed Fund was launched in Jordan and Lebanon on 14 September and will now close on 27 October to coincide with the closure of the second tranche of the Fund in UAE, Qatar and Bahrain. Full details of the Fund are available through Arab Bank's extensive branch network. In addition, Arab Bank has placed a team of specially trained Investment Executives in major branch locations throughout the Middle East who will provide detailed information on the Fund.

The Arab Bank Capital Guaranteed Fund, which requires a minimum investment of U.S.$5,000, will mature in two years, and provide investors with the opportunity of benefiting in rises in the Nikkei Index, Japan's index of leading shares. Based on its considerable knowledge and experience of the Asian marketplace, Arab Bank believes that the Nikkei currently provides attractive valuation and exciting future growth potential.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates — Prices as at 11/10/97 19:01

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7505	0.6156	1.4606	120.05	1.3777	1721.01	1.9715	5.8705
DE Mark	0.5713	-	0.3514	0.8343	68.57	0.7868	982.87	1.1282	3.3535
GB Sterling	1.6245	2.8333	-	2.3577	193.66	2.2361	2795.78	3.2027	9.5386
CH Franc	0.6847	119.78	0.4211	-	82.16	0.9427	1177.84	135.38	4.0170
JP Yen	0.0083	1.4575	0.5124	1.2162	-	1.1471	14.33	164.15	4.8880
CA Dollar	0.7258	1.2660	0.4471	1.0565	1.15	-	1247.46	1.4257	4.2427
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0165	0.3574	0.0848	1435.75	0.8001	-	11.45	3.4091
NL Guilder	0.5072	88.77	0.3121	74.08	60.85	0.6988	872.72	-	2.9769
FR Franc	0.1703	0.2981	0.1048	24.8719	20.43	0.2346	33.57	33.5700	-

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7505	0.3770	3.6402	0.3038	3.6729	1536.75	3.3990
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	5.2973	0.5325	5.1415	0.4290	5.1877	2170.55	4.8008
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1888	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0810	0.98	409.75	0.9063
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8780	9.9485	-	9.66	0.8057	9.74	4076.37	9.0162
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0303	1.0303	-	0.0834	1.01	422.18	0.9337
Kuwait Dinar	3.2922	2.3309	12.3473	1.2411	11.98	-	12.09	5058.28	11.3337
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0211	0.1026	0.9911	0.0827	-	418.40	0.9254
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4607	2.4405	0.2453	2.3688	0.1977	2.3900	-	2.2118
Egyptian	0.2942	0.2083	1.1034	0.1109	1.0710	0.0894	1.0806	452.12	-

Energy

Oils	Last	revious
Brent	21.01	20.88
W. Texa	21.96	21.98
Bonny	21.01	20.88
Dubai	19.40	19.65
UL Gas	205.00	199.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4669	0.16413	0.38965	32.0225
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.47674	0.1676	0.39788	32.699
KW Dinar	3.2922	5.76369	2.02675	4.81232	395.413
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.64468	1.63282	3.87587	318.573
CY Pound	1.9236	3.3673	1.1838	2.8096	230.928

*** JOD Cross Rates**

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1481	1.1538
DE Mark	0.404	0.406
CH Franc	0.4849	0.4873
FR Franc	0.1204	0.121
JP Yen	0.5889	0.5918
NL Guilder	0.3586	0.3604
IT Lira	0.4106	0.4127

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Period / Cncy	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	1 Year
USD	5.54	5.65	5.72	5.83	5.88
GBP	7.06	7.25	7.30	7.31	7.46
JPY	0.43	0.50	0.45	0.47	0.51
DEM	3.32	3.50	3.63	3.62	3.96
FRF	3.27	3.54	3.65	3.82	3.97
CHF	1.43	1.56	1.78	1.81	1.93
ITL	6.74	6.88	8.38	6.12	5.93

...n equity indices

Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
NewYork	DOW JONES	8045.21	-16.21	-0.2	8059.45	8002.73	8061.42
Newydrk	S&P 500	966.98	-3.64	-0.38	970.62	963.42	970.62
London	FT-SE 100	5227.3	9.5	0.18	5227.3	5186.7	5217.8
Tokyo	NIKKIE 225	17376.92	-242.26	-1.37	17627.6	17330.7	17619.2
Paris	CAC 40	2955.11	-5.54	-0.19	2957.56	2906.81	2960.65
Frankfurt	DAX	4188.52	-54.49	-1.28	4203.25	4155.48	4243.01

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 11/10/1997

	PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
	346.000	241.500	ARAB BANK	15.4	1.19	1	100	33550	335.50	335.50	-
N	2.340	1.680	JOR.NATIONAL BK.	E	0.00	12	43550	84487	1.94	1.94	-
	1.190	.890	MID.EAST INV.BK.	76.9	0.00	34	116876	136743	1.11	1.17	.06+
	2.600	2.150	INDUSTRIAL DEV.BK.	10.2	6.16	38	20750	53405	2.55	2.57	.02+
	5.200	4.600	THE HOUSING BK.	14.9	3.90	13	57000	283860	4.93	4.98	.05+
	1.050	.740	JOR.GULF BANK	4.7	8.86	7	2230	1766	.79	.79	-
	4.050	3.520	JOR.ISLAMIC BANK	15.0	3.25	14	3355	12375	3.67	3.69	.02+
	3.750	3.080	JOR.INV.FIN.BANK	23.8	0.00	4	420	1546	3.56	3.71	.13+
	2.030	.890	BEIT.AL-MAL (BEITMA)	.6	16.48	1	250	228	.92	.91	.01-
	BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 240.69	%CHG: +0.19	124	244531	607959			
	2.170	1.590	JOR FRENCH INSUR.	5.4	7.81	1	150	288	1.92	1.92	-
	INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 114.70	%CHG: 0.00	1	150	288			
	2.050	1.550	JOR.ELECTRIC PWR.	9.2	5.24	16	5445	10399	1.91	1.91	-
	4.030	1.320	IRBID ELECTRICITY	20.9	3.28	2	700	2461	3.69	3.51	.18-
	1.740	1.150	MID. EAST HOTELS	21.3	0.00	9	18300	25620	1.40	1.40	-
	1.170	.930	ZARKA EDUCATION	9	0.00	2	1500	1400	.94	.93	.01-
	.950	.640	UNION LAND DEV.	9	0.00	15	6125	4768	.74	.78	.04+
	SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 110.93	%CHG: +0.09	46	32070	44647			
	1.050	.930	ATTAHQEEB	9	0.00	4	502	502	1.00	1.00	-
	4.450	3.220	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	23.3	3.16	21	5471	19031	3.54	3.46	.08-
	4.140	3.000	JOR.PHOSPHATE MINES	10.3	2.70	2	800	2960	3.70	3.70	-
	7.050	5.420	ARAB POTASH CO.	14.0	3.33	2	700	4200	6.03	6.00	.03-
	11.100	9.070	JOR. PETROL.REFINERY	10.6	8.10	10	392	4296	10.97	10.97	-
	1.410	1.050	WOOLEN INDUSTRIES	9.4	9.17	4	5500	5997	1.12	1.09	.03-
+	3.260	1.610	INDUSTRIAL COMM.AGR.	9	0.00	4	395	617	1.61	1.60	.01-
	7.150	5.800	JOR.WORSTED MILLS	11.1	2.90	3	1000	6925	6.95	6.90	.05-
	4.700	3.040	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	12.6	4.39	20	6057	27700	4.60	4.56	.04-
	3.850	2.220	ARAB ALUM.IND.	5.6	10.50	1	100	238	2.39	2.38	.01-
	.710	.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	10.6	0.00	4	1950	978	.51	.50	.01-
	1.230	.620	ARAB PAPER CONV.TRD.	27.2	0.00	4	1350	1212	.93	.89	.04-
	1.200	.510	INTERMED.PETRO.CHEM.	9	0.00	18	14550	8169	.57	.56	.01-
	.890	.530	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	9	0.00	8	5500	3833	.70	.69	.01-
	1.670	1.120	ARAB PHARM.CHEM.	16.5	5.43	7	1150	1473	1.28	1.29	.01+
	1.860	1.080	UNIV. MODN.INDS.	P	.21	12	7600	9292	1.23	1.22	.01-
	1.460	.690	JOR.INDS.RESOURCES	12.2	10.99	2	2100	1931	.92	.91	.01-
	1.620	1.300	NATL. CHLORINE	14.7	4.49	4	7000	10920	1.56	1.56	-
	1.070	.610	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	15.8	0.00	13	6950	6014	.87	.86	.01-
	1.330	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	6.3	0.00	3	1750	2030	1.18	1.16	.02-
	1.200	.860	UNION CH. & VEG.	52.7	0.00	6	4900	5674	1.13	1.16	.03+
	INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 118.15	%CHG: -0.72	152	75717	124010			
	GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 173.48	%CHG: -0.14	323	352468	776903			

PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 11/10/1997

	.630	.300	CENTRAL GEN.STORAGE	9	0.00	5	10450	3405	.32	.33	.01+
	.610	.380	JOR.TRADE FAC.	10.7	0.00	56	181750	73178	.41	.40	.01-
	.790	.660	UNION INV. 50%	9	0.00	29	128500	37258	.78	.79	.01+
	.570	.360	ARAB FIN.INVEST.	9	0.00	16	40250	16100	.40	.40	-
N	.950	.720	AL-SHARQ INV.CO.	P	0.00	2	2135	1815	.85	.85	-
N	1.110	.850	UNITED FOR FINAN.INV	57.3	0.00	1	500	550	1.11	1.10	.01-
	.540	.380	ARAB INTL.INV.TRD.	47.2	0.00	5	2750	1105	.40	.41	.01+
	.650	.380	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	3	15000	5850	.39	.39	-
	.750	.400	NATL.MULT.ENG.MANICO	9	0.00	25	124200	51411	.41	.41	-
N	1.020	.890	READY MIX CONCRETE	12.1	0.00	1	5000	5000	.98	1.00	.02+
	.610	.710	JORDAN STEEL	33.9	6.67	3	4000	3000	.75	.75	-
	.520	.460	ARAB ELECT.INDS.	9	0.00	1	7000	3220	.46	.46	-
	.650	.580	MIDEAST PHARM. 75%	E	0.00	12	42300	15651	.61	.62	.01+
T	1.300	.860	UNION TOBACCO 75%	9	0.00	6	1850	1984	1.30	1.33	.03+
	.730	.550	RAZI PHARM. 85%	E	0.00	3	3800	1938	.66	.66	-
	.490	.290	INDS. ENG.	9	0.00	13	10700	3561	.34	.33	.01-
	.820	.590	NATL. POULTRY	E	0.00	7	4150	2614	.64	.63	.01-
N	1.020	.720	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	44.8	0.00	3	1585	1429	.89	.93	.04+
	.840	.580	MID.EAST COMPLEX	7.5	16.39	29	73700	45384	.61	.61	-
	GRAND TOTAL					220	659621	274451			

Jordan gets offers for Aqaba refinery

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Jordan has received offers from two international groups to build a refinery in Aqaba at a cost of $2 billion, its energy minister said in press comments Saturday.

The refinery in the southern Jordanian port near the Israeli border will have an output capacity of 250,000 barrels per day (bpd) and all its products will be exported, Mohammed Saleb Horani said.

"The (energy) ministry bas so far received offers from two international consortiums to build the refinery in Aqaba," he said in an interview with the United Arab Emirates business weekly Emirates Today.

"They will bear all costs and investments. These offers are still under study and there is no decision on them yet," be added.

The minister did not name those companies or give further details of the refining project, which has been on the cards for more than a year.

Jordan gets all its crude oil from Iraq with permission from the United Nations, which bas imposed crippling sanctions on Baghdad for its 1990 invasion of neigbbouring Kuwait.

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Villeneuve aims for title under suspension in Japan GP

SUZUKA (AFP) — Canadian Jacques Villeneuve races for the 1997 World Drivers' Championship in Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix, but could lose it Paris a few days later.

In an extraordinary sequence of events, Villeneuve could still finally beat rival Michael Schumacher to the title in the season's final race in Jerez, Spain, Oct. 26.

Villeneuve was first disqualified from the race on Saturday for an admitted fault in practice before he won pole position for the race, then reinstated to race after his Williams-Renault team appealed.

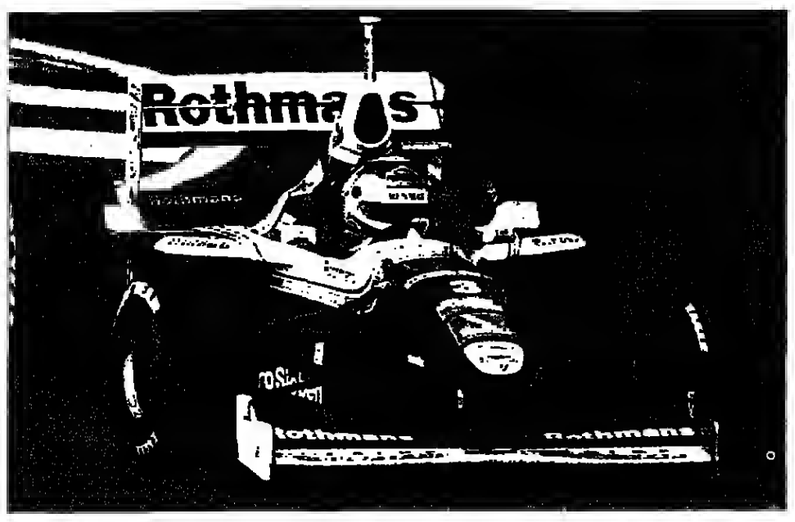
Officials of the International Automobile Federation (FIA) said it was hoped the appeal would be heard by the FIA's International Appeal Tribunal in Paris before the final race of the season in Jerez, Spain, Oct. 26.

Villeneuve leads Schumacher by nine points and in theory only needs to finish one point ahead of him Sunday to win the title.

But the result and the title could be stripped from him by the Tribunal, which could also increase the penalty of disqualification from this race.

"I find it very difficult to accept now that we are fighting it out at the end of the championship," Villeneuve said.

"It's been a very difficult season, the most difficult season I've ever been part of in any form of racing," he added.



Formula One world championship leader Jacques Villeneuve of Canada drives his Williams to clock a fastest time of one minute 36.071 seconds on a qualifying practice session run at Suzuka Circuit for the Japanese Grand Prix. Villeneuve was disqualified from Sunday's Grand Prix race for ignoring a yellow caution flag during the practice run, and then later reinstated following an appeal (Reuters photo)

The penalty was imposed because in morning practice, Villeneuve did not reduce speed after passing a waved yellow flag indicating danger ahead because Jos Verstappen's Tyrrell Ford was parked on the track edge after an engine failure.

He admitted at a post-qualifying press conference that he had seen the flag.

"When you are flat out on the straight I don't think you should step on the brakes," he said. "In a corner, I would have done."

Villeneuve had already been given a suspended one race ban for the same offence at the Italian Grand Prix, and the race stewards here made the suspension active, banning him from Sunday's race.

They also inflicted various suspended penalties on five other drivers Saturday for failing to respond to the same flag situation.

Schumacher in his Ferrari, Japan's Ukyo Katayama in a Minardi-Hart, Briton Johnny Herbert in a Sauber and another German, Heinz-Harald Frentzen in a Williams-Renault received suspended one-race bans, an FIA statement said.

"A certain number of drivers did the same thing out of the nine who were on the track as the same time," Villeneuve said.

"We believe we have good reason to appeal. Hopefully the appeal will be worth something for the Championship," he said.

Villeneuve and Schumacher start the race on the front row of the grid, with Schumacher's teammate Eddie Irvine behind them on the second row with Mika Hakkinen (McLaren Mercedes).

Heavyweight hopefuls seek title fight with Lewis

LAS VEGAS (AFP) — American heavyweights Ray Mercer, Tim Witherspoon and James "Buster" Douglas are hoping to lure British champion Lennox Lewis into a fight for his World Boxing Council title.

Lewis beat Andrew Golota in 95 seconds to keep his crown one week ago to set up a likely title fight against the winner of next month's bout between rival champions Evander Holyfield and Michael Moorer.

Mercer has offered Lewis $20 million for a title bout and vows to fight for free if Lewis agrees to donate $10 million to a charity of Mercer's chosing should Mercer beat him for the title.

Mercer lost a 10-round decision to Lewis 17 months ago. Witherspoon, who fights Levi Billups next month, is promoted by the same group that backs Lewis.

Douglas, who pulled out of a Saturday bout while in the midst of a comeback after retirement, wants to fight anyone with a title to legitimize his return.

Vaughn Bean and Orlin Norris have legal claims to fight for titles against the Holyfield-Moorer winner but both sanctioning bodies are likely to waive the mandatory challenges as neither challenger offers as lucrative a pay-per-view option as Lewis.

Unfit Perkins makes way for new Aussie swim sensation

BRISBANE (AFP) — Under-prepared Kieren Perkins was blown away by new swimming sensation Grant Hackett and won't get the opportunity to defend his world title after finishing third in the 1500 metres freestyle at the Australian championships here Saturday.

The Australian great, who holds three world records and is a dual Olympic 1500m gold medallist, struggled home almost 22 seconds adrift of 17-year-old Hackett, who looks set to assume Perkins' mantle as Australia's premier swimmer.

Hackett stormed to a personal best 15 minutes 01.46 seconds, just failing to break the 15-minute barrier with a sizzling 57.36 seconds final lap to beat Atlanta Olympic silver medallist Daniel Kowalski (15:08.05) and Perkins (15:23.45).

Only two swimmers per event are chosen for the world championships in Perth next January, so Perkins, the reigning 400m and 1500m freestyle world champion, misses out on swimming against the world's best.

Perkins finished fifth in Wednesday's 400m freestyle final behind Hackett and failed to qualify for the 200m freestyle final, ruling him out of even a relay swim at the world titles.

Perkins' time Saturday was more than 42 seconds behind his phenomenal world record 14:41.66 at the Victoria Commonwealth Games in Canada in August 1994.

"It's the longest 30 laps I've ever swum and I'm feeling very sore," Perkins said.

The 24-year-old superstar was unable to produce the same face-saving effort as at last year's Atlanta Olympics where he came back after only just scraping into the final to smash the 15-minute barrier and win his second consecutive Olympic gold in the event.

Earlier that year, he also rose to the occasion with a last gasp silver behind Kowalski in the 1500m at the Sydney Olympic trials to make the Atlanta team.

Perkins, though, had made it clear this week that making the team for Perth never had the same sense of urgency as the possibility of missing the Olympics.

"I'm not too unhappy with missing the team because there's always been the expectation that I might," he said.

The new father came into the meet only 85 per cent fit after a disruptive year which included marriage and the birth of daughter Georgia Jane last month.

He said he would now get back into training in preparation for an assault on April's trials for the Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games next September.

"I want to stay in the sport because it's what I love," he said.

"I've got six months to get myself back together and give these boys a fright when the Commonwealth Games trials come around.

"I've got a lot of improvement left in me. There's a lot of things I can work on and six months to do it in."

Hackett's swim is the second fastest recorded in the world this year behind Italian Emiliano Brembilla, who clocked 14:58.65 at the European titles in August.

But the 17-year-old high school student, who annexed the 400m-800m-1500m freestyle treble at the Pan Pacific Championships in Japan last August, was disappointed with his time.

He went into the feature race hoping to become the eighth swimmer to go under the magical 15 minutes for the 30-lap event.

"I should have taken the race out harder," said Hackett, who upped the tempo at the 1100m to pull away from Kowalski.

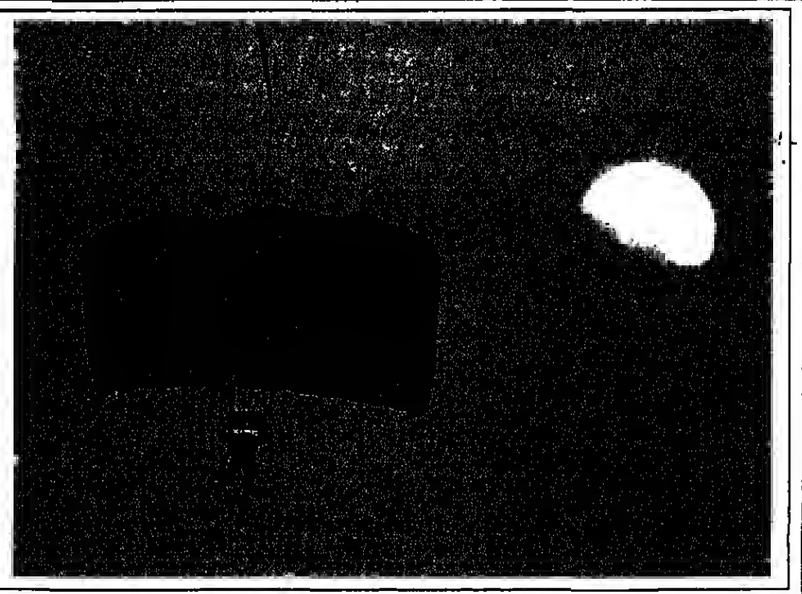
Kowalski's effort to make the Perth team is remarkable considering he suffered serious shoulder and back problems this year.

The 22-year-old came into the meet on a greatly reduced training schedule.

"I started with 3km when I got back into training in July and I've just been building up each week," said Kowalski.

"I was still only doing about 38km a week leading into the meet compared with my usual workload of about 80km."

His time ranks him fourth on 1997 world rankings.



A skydiver sails past the moon into Jakarta's main stadium October 11 for the opening ceremony of the South East Asian Games (SEA Games). More than 4,300 athletes from 10 countries are participating in the regional sporting event, which lasts until October 19 (Reuters photo)

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North-South vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
♠ A Q 10
♥ J 10 9 8 3
♦ 4
♣ A K J 2

WEST
♠ K J 7 2
♥ A Q 5 2
♦ 6 6 2
♣ 6 6

EAST
♠ 6 5 3 4
♥ K 8 4
♦ 5
♣ Q 10 8 5 3

SOUTH
♠ 5 3
♥ 7
♦ A K Q J 10 6 7 3
♣ 7 4

The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♥	Pass	3♦	Pass
3NT	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♦	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening lead: ?

If there is one choice of opening lead that gets universal approval, it is to make an aggressive lead against a freely bid small slam. More often than not declarer has a side suit which will permit discards unless the defenders take their tricks first. An attacking lead may establish a second trick for the defense before declarer can utilize that suit. What would you lead against six diamonds?

Note South's jump shift to three diamonds over the one-heart opening bid. In the modern style that does not promise more than a self-sufficient suit or a good hand with support for partner' suit, and no-one will argue about the quality of South's suit. Four no trump was intended as ace-asking and read as such, and South bid the small slam on learning that just one ace was missing.

Sitting West was one of the world's great players, Italian many-time world champion Benito Garozzo, now a resident of West Palm Beach. He ruled out a red-suit lead, and a club would be helpful only if partner held the king. Spades seemed a more promising suit, since the queen with partner was all that was required. But Garozzo did not choose just any spade — he selected the jack!

Consider the effect that would have on any player sitting South. With a fast heart lead, declarer needed to find either the king of spades or queen of clubs onside. The opening lead made it look as if the spade finesse was sure to fail, so declarer rose with the ace, drew trumps and then led a club to the jack — down two!

World Judo Championship

Revenge for Nakamura clan as gold beckons for Restoux, Gonzalez

PARIS (AFP) — Japanese strength in depth allowed their judokas to exact revenge on Udo Quellmalz here on Saturday as the Olympic and world champion found himself ambushed by Kenzo Nakamura, who scored a waza-ari win to reach the final of the men's -71kg division.

Quellmalz moved up a category to take on Kenzo, the reigning Olympic champion in the division, after excelling in the half lightweight class both at Atlanta and in Chiba two years ago.

On those two occasions the German forced Japan to make do with silver after Quellmalz got the better of Yukimasa Nakamura, one of Kenzo's two older brothers, who are also competing here.

The eldest of the Nakamura clan, Yoshio, got a bronze in the -95kg category on Thursday.

Yukimasa, a gold medalist in 1993, was Japan's main loser of the day as he sensationally lost to Algeria's Amar Meridja on a decision with the pair locked at a yuko each.

But Meridja then lost out on making the -65kg pool final as he succumbed to France's European bronze medalist Larbi Benboudaoud, earlier the conqueror of South Africa's Duncan Mackinnon by a waza-ari for a stranglehold.

The crowd erupted in fury when Benboudaoud was handed a penalty which would have put the Algerian just in front but he finally lost out on a yuko having scored three kokas to the Frenchman's none.

Meridja then provoked a storm of booing when he raised a clenched fist to the ebullient French fans. George Vazagashvili of Georgia awaited Benboudaoud in the pool final.

Kazue Nagai of Japan (R) in action against Raffae Imbriani of Germany in the first round of the -52kgs category at the World Judo Championships (Reuters photo)

Japan went into the third day of the four-day championship trailing in third place in the medals table with just the one gold secured by Noriko Anno in the women's -72kg class, compared with three for the effervescent French and two for bitter rivals South Korea.

And France looked set to retain their advantage as, in the women's -52kg event, Olympic and world champion Marie-Claire Restoux swept into the pool final after surviving a scare to win a decision against Marisa Pedulla of the United States and then beating Luce Baillargeon of Canada.

Restoux, who could only manage bronze at the European championships in Ostende, was greeted on each occasion with deafening applause and shouts of "Marie-Claire".

Former double champion, British veteran Sharon Rendle, was handled out of the gold and silver reckoning as the 1995 bronze winner lost on ippon to Legna Verdecia of Cuba.

Restoux was on a collision course with North Korean Kye Sun Hui, who won the -48kg title in Atlanta before changing category.

In the women's lightweight (-56kg) section, reigning Olympic and world champion Driulis Gonzalez of Cuba a scored waza ari win over European bronze medalist Magali Batton of France, who knocked out South Korea's Park Mi Hee, East Asian Games bronze winner, by waza ari.

Korean Atlanta silver medalist Jung Sun Yong was not competing here, while yet another Korean star, Jung Sung Sook, decided not to go in for event where she snatched silver behind Gonzalez two years ago, preferring to turn her efforts to the lightweight event, where she took gold in 1995.

Japan's Chiyori Tateno, who won the Austrian open last year, lost on ippon to Spain's Atlanta bronze medalist Isabel Fernandez.

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John Travolta & Nicholas Cage ...in
FACE OFF
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Cindy Crawford ...in
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MEN IN BLACK
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Norway's Kurt-Asle Arvesen celebrates after winning the under-23 road race at the World Cycling Championships on October 11. Spaniard Oscar Freire (R) was second and Austrian Gerrit Glomser (L) placed third (Renters photo)

Sweet revenge for Hingis as she thrashes Coetzer

FILDERSTADT (AFP) — World No. 1 Martina Hingis enjoyed sweet revenge over Amanda Coetzer on Saturday when she thrashed the South African 6-2, 6-1 to reach the final of the WTA tournament here.

Hingis lost to Coetzer at the same semi-final stage two weeks ago in Leipzig, but there oever any danger of a repeat oo Saturday as she blew away Coetzer in 54 minutes.

"It was payback time — I don't like losing twice in a row to the same player," 17-year-old Hingis said after her win.

Revenge wasn't the only driving force motivating Hingis here, however. Victory in Sunday's final will net her a Porsche car from the sponsors, and Hingis wants it badly. "A Porsche, that's motivation," sbe said.

First she will have to see off surprising American Lisa Raymond, who shocked Romanian world number nine Irina Spirlea 6-3, 6-1 in the other semi-final.

Raymond, 24-years-old and ranked 23 in the world, beat World No. 2 Jana Novotna of the Czech Repuhlic in the quarter-finals and she continued her fine form by beating No. 8 seed Spirlea with ease.

"I'm playing my best tennis for ages," Raymond said.

Kiefer reaches Singapore final

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Germany's rising tennis star Nicolas Kiefer, seeking his second title in two weeks, beat the pain barrier and Swede Mikael Tillstrom to sweep into the Singapore Open tennis final Saturday.

Eighth-seeded Kiefer, a protege of compatriot Boris Becker and rated the most promising German tennis prospect, overcame a sprained right wrist to come from behind to win 6-7 (1-7), 6-3, 6-3.

In Sunday's final, Kiefer will meet another Swede, 30-year-old Magnus Gustafsson, who overcame 22-year-old countryman Thomas Johansson 7-6 (7-5), 4-6, 7-6 (10-8) in a cliffhanger of a semifinal.

Kiefer prevented an all-Swedish final at the Singapore Indoor Stadium which has witnessed the premature exit of top seed Michael Chang, second seed Marcelo Rios, third seed Jim Courier and fourth seed Mark Woodforde.

But his wrist injury was serious enough to force the 20-year-old Kiefer and his partner Alex Radulescu to pull out of their doubles semifinal against Americans Jonathan Stark and Rick Leach, who received a walkover.

Stark and Leach will face the winners of the secood semifinal betweeo Mahesh Bhupathi and Leander Paes of India and Tillstrom and his compatriot Niklas Kulti.

Kiefer, the World No. 48 who woo his first ATP tour title in Toulouse two weeks ago, sprained his right wrist late in the first set while diving for a shoi at the net. He went on to lose the ensuing tiehreak easily 7-1.

"Because of my hand I couldn't serve so good but I am very happy io win," said Kiefer, who was confident he would be abe to play Sunday's final despite the injury.

"The win in Toulouse gave me a lot of confidence. May be I can do it again," added the German, who had served consistently at 200 kmph (124 mph) in beating Rios on Friday but controlled the power of his game against Tillstrom.

For Gustafsson, trying to rebuild a career interrupted hy injury, it will be the second final in two weeks.

Gustafsson lost narrowly last week to Courier in the China Open.

"This is a lucky win, this was not because of tactics or because I played better. Both of us were fighting like hell. I don't know why I won," added Gustafsson

He said he was "pretty upset" with the disputed line call but "hung in there", and added he was looking forward to taking on Kiefer whom he has never played.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Rusedski wins battle of Britain

VIENNA (AFP) — World No. 4 Greg Rusedski woo the battle of the Brits on Saturday, beating Tim Henman 6-4, 6-4 to qualify for the final of the ATP tournament here. The 24-year-old, Canadian-born but a naturalised Britoo thanks to his English mother, recorded his first win in four meetings with Henman, ranked 21 in the world, with a break in each set in just over an hour. Rusedski, the first Briton to be ranked in the world top 10 and a winner last week in Basel, Switzerland, made the decisive break in the second set at 3-3 with two successive backhand passes down the line — the second one after a tentative volley hy Henman. Rusedski, who has made at least the last eight for the past seven successive ATP tournaments including the U.S. Open final, had hroken his 23-year-old opponent at 2-2 in the first set by producing some scintillating returns and taking the game when he provoked Henman into a loose volley. It was Henman's secood consecutive semi-final loss. Victory saw Rusedski move nearer to his goal of appearing in the ATP finals in Hanover. He will face either Croatian Goran Ivanisevic, seeded three, or unseeded Dutchman Richard Krajicek, the 1996 Wimhledon champion, in Sunday's final here.

Baseball will fight realignment plans

BALTIMORE (AFP) — Major League Baseball Players Association president Don Fehr warned owners than any plan for major shuffling of teams between leagues will be opposed. With a Wednesday deadline looming, owners will be faced with coming to a decisioo quickly or pushing back the deadline again, having already upset clubs who await alignment and schedule decisions to sell 1998 tickets. Owners contend they do not need players' union approval to shift cluhs between the American and National leagues. Fehr said the players' power to veto interleague play for 1998 gives them the ahility to stop huge changes. "Players believe you shouldn't destroy the integrity of the existing leagues without compelling reasons," Fehr said. "This thing has to be resolved fairly promptly. If it's a significant realignment, legally we can stop it." Acting commissiooer Bud Selig said lawyers will decide, but a protracted fight would doom the goal of securing schedules for clubs to sell tickets for games that begin next April.

French player tests positive

LE HAVRE (AFP) — Freoch internatiooal striker Cyrille Pouget, who moved from Paris St Germain to Le Havre in the close season, has tested positive for the anabolic steroid Nandrolone. Le Havre club chairman Jean Pierre Hureau said he believed the player was innocent. Pouget has asked for a second analysis. He went from Metz to Servette Geneva a year ago before returning to France to play for PSG.

Police detain England fans

ROME (AFP) — Five England fans were detained here Friday night after trying to steal drink from a bar and throwing bottles at Italian police. The trouble started after trainloads of England fans arrived at Rome's main Termini station oo the eve of Saturday night's World Cup qualifier with Italy. A group of fans tried to take advantage of a nearby bar beiog packed with their fellow countrymeo by taking away bottles of beer and other alcoholic drinks without paying. The fans were surrounded by police hut responded hy throwing bottles at them.

10-man England score surprise win

RIETI, Italy (AFP) — Teo-man England scored a 1-0 victory over Italy in Rieti in Friday night's European Under-21 Championship qualifier when Kieron Dyer sealed a magnificent personal performance with the late goal. It was a remarkable finish after the unbeaten visitors had Wimbledon defender Ben Thatcher sent off after just half-an-hour and the win enabled England to finish six points clear of second placed Georgia in Group Two. Italy were seven points behind. Thatcher was controversially shown the red card when he clashed with Francesco Totti. The England camp later claimed that the Italian had taken a deliberate dive.

Spartak-Sion replay confirmed

GENEVA (AFP) — UEFA have ordered Sion to replay Spartak Moscow in Moscow on Oct 15 and dismissed a Swiss appeal for the Russian side to be disqualified. The European Football Union said the match would be played at the Luzhniki stadium and not at the Lokomotiv stadium where the goals were found to be 12cm too low after the 2-2 draw which led to a 3-2 aggregate defeat for Sioo. Spartak will start the match a goal ahead thanks to their 1-0 win in Switzerland. The eventual winners will face the Spaniards of Real Valladolid in the second round.

Ailing Rodman will miss Paris

CHICAGO (AFP) — Dennis Rodman, the National Basketball Association's rebounding champion the last six years, couldn't finalize his contract with Chicago Friday because of illness.

The flamboyant forward's contract with the NBA champion Bulls was cootingent oo his passing a physical, and bronchitis and mild pneumonia prevented Rodman from completing his examination.

Dennis will be treated with antibiotics for another week and will return to California while the team is in Paris."

The Bulls are headed to Paris to compete in the McDonald's Championship starting on October 16.

Rodman, who made $9 million last season, has agreed to a reported one-year cootract worth at least $4 million with escalating clauses.

The agreement with Rodman comes after starting forward Scottie Pippen had left foot surgery that will force him to miss up to three months.

Rodman, 36, is best known for controversial kicking and head-butting as well as his rainbow hair colors. Last season the Bulls suspended Rodman for two games and the league banished him for 12 games, 11 for kicking a cameraman and one for a scuffle with a rival player.

A sprained knee sidelined him for the final month of the season, but Rodman still won the NBA rebounding title with 16.1 a game over 55 contests. In the playoffs his average slid to 8.4 rebounds.

Asian World Cup qualifiers

Uzbeks pile on Japanese misery

TASHKENT (AFP) — A lucky goal by Masami Ihara in the dying moments saved Japan from a disastrous defeat as they salvaged a 1-1 draw with Uzbekistan in the World Cup Asian Zone Group B qualifying match on Saturday.

Ihara's long through-ball from the midfield was missed by Uzbek goal keeper Pavel Bugalo and rolled into the net in 88th minute.

Earlier, Uzbekistan took the lead in the 31st minute through Bahtiyor Qambaraliyev's shot from outside the area.

Abdikohkor Marifaliev's effort hit a Japanese defender, but Qambaraliyev quickly latched ooto the rebound, hammering it past keeper Yoshikatsu Kawaguchi.

The Japanese, who are in grave danger of missing out on qualification, now have one win, three draws and one defeat for six points, seven points below the Koreans and one less than the United Arab Emirates.

Uzbekistan, the 1994 Asian Games gold medallists, bave two draws and three defeats for two points at bottom of the five-nation round robin.

Kazakhstan and South Korea drew 1-1 in Almaty Saturday.

The winners of the group automatically advance to the finals and the runners-up will take on second placers of Group A, while the losers of the playoff will play Australia in the last playoff.

Sixth-inning surge lifts Marlins past Braves

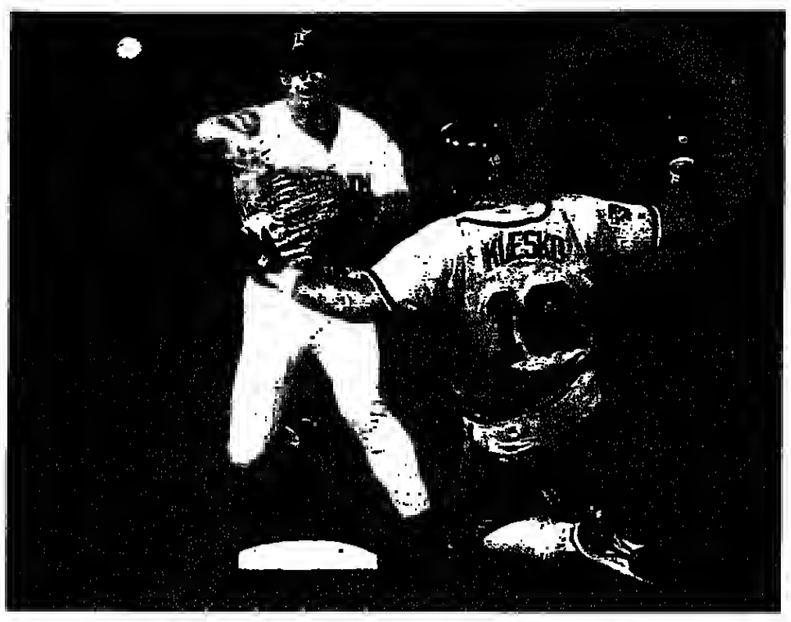
MIAMI (AFP) — Charles Johnson's three-run double highlighted a four-run sixth inning that lifted Florida to a 5-2 victory over Atlanta Friday in the National League championship series.

The win gave Florida a 2-1 lead in the best-of-seven series that will send one of the teams to the World Series.

The Marlins host game four on Saturday, when they will send Al Leiter to the mound.

Atlanta will counter with 20-game winner Denny Neagle, who will make his first start this postseason.

Livan Hernandez pitched 1 2/3 scoreless innings in relief of starter Tony Saunders to notch the win. Dennis Cook pitched a perfect eighth before Robb Nen did the same in the ninth for his second save of the playoffs.



Atlanta Braves Ryan Klesko (18) is forced out at second base as Florida Marlins second baseman Craig Counsell throws to first to complete a double play in the third inning of game three of the NLCS. The teams are tied at one game apiece (Reuters photo)

Smoltz was thwarted — partly by his teammates — in his bid to become baseball's all-time winningest pitcher in the postseason.

Despite striking out nine batters in six innings, Smoltz was reached for five runs and five hits. He walked five — two intentional — but saw poor defense lead to all four runs in the decisive sixth inning.

Smoltz fell to 10-3 all-time in the post-season and 6-2 in the NL finals.

Trailing 2-1 in the bottom of the sixth, Florida's Edgar Renteria laced a one-out double to left-center field. Smoltz pitched around Gary Sheffield, walking him. Bobby Bonilla, batting left-handed, lined the first pitch he saw to the warning track in left field, but Ryan Klesko hauled it in for the second out.

Darren Daulton lined a 1-1 pitch to right field that Andruw Jones misjudged, and the ball sailed over his head, allowing Renteria to score the tying run. Devon White was intentionally walked before Johnson, who had struck out 11 times in his 15 prior at-bats against Smoltz, went down and pulled a 2-2 curveball into the gap in left-centre field. Klesko barely missed making a full-length diving catch on the warning track as all three runners scored.

Atlanta failed to muster a threat in the final three innings, getting just one hit.

The teams matched zeroes the first three innings, but Smoltz was clearly the more dominant pitcher, striking out six and fanning the side in the third.

Atlanta scratched through for a run in the fourth with the help of a disputed play. Kenny Lofton led off with a single and Jeff Blauser walked on a full-count pitch. On the play, Lofton was running, and was inadvertently called out by second base umpire Eric Gregg, who was calling the play as a stolen base when the throw came to second base.

Lofton, thinking he was out, stepped off the base and towards the dugout, when second baseman Craig Counsell tagged him. But Gregg, not realizing it was ball four, ordered Lofton hack to the bag. An argument ensued, and Lofton was allowed to stay on second.

This prompted Marlins manager Jim Leyland to file a protest.

During the game, National League President Leonard Coleman issued a statement that read, "The umpires ruled that it was umpire error that the runner had been inappropriately called out when it was ball four, and therefore placed him on the appropriate base."

MABARRAT UM AL HUSSEIN

Numbers of winning prizes in the lottery of the Charity Bazaar of Mabarrat Um al Hussein which took place on Oct. 9,1997

Prize No.	Winning No.	Prize No.	Winning No.	Prize No.	Winning No.
First	3482	14th	3414	27th	7080
2nd	8029	15th	9431	28th	5381
3rd	5839	16th	2583	29th	3116
4th	285	17th	5013	30th	2549
5th	9921	18th	11856	31th	6784
6th	4435	19th	5407	32th	3145
7th	6610	20th	4511	33th	232
8th	9528	21th	3807	34th	8766
9th	2966	22th	9893	35th	8540
10th	1892	23th	7076	36th	235
11th	4575	24th	89	37th	118
12th	11313	25th	4928	38th	3897
13th	7403	26th	10304		

Note: The winners should call at Mabarrat Um al Hussein -north Marka district near the workshops of the Public Transport Corporation Tel: 892680

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Admission starts at 8:30pm, Show starts at 10:30 pm
Ticket price JD 25

Heineken mazda

Algiers mosque bomb toll put at 6 dead, 40 wounded

PARIS (R) — An Algerian newspaper said Saturday a bomb blast at a mosque in Algiers during Friday prayers killed six worshippers and wounded 40 others, many of them critically.

Newspapers said that on the same day a bomb exploded in a cemetery in a neighbouring town, killing an 11-year-old boy, and a bomb in another Algiers mosque was spotted and burled outside the building before exploding, slightly wounding one man.

The dailies also reported two gunmen sbot dead a moderate Islamist candidate for this month's local elections in the eastern town of Constantine, and government troops killed 13 Islamist rebels in Algieis and the western town of Oran.

A bomb ripped through a mosque in Bouzareah district on the heights of Algiers at noon Friday killing six people and wounding 40 more among worshippers gathered for Friday prayer, Liberte newspaper said.

Twenty-seven of the wounded were in serious condition, it said. Residents earlier said the bomb killed five people.

"I was giving the sermon when I saw a young man wbo was carrying a bag get in. He briefly got into a position of praying and then left before the explosion," the mosque's prayer leader told Liberte.

At an another mosque in the area, a man spotted a hidden bomb and threw it out of window, the newspaper said. The bomb exploded outside the mosque, slightly injuring the man.

A third bomb exploded at a cemetery, killing a boy and wounding four people in Sidi Moussa, south of Algiers, La Tribune newspaper said.

Algerians usually visit cemeteries Fridays to pray for dead relatives.

No one claimed responsibility for the bombings.

Several bundreds of civilians were killed in Algeria in the past three years on bomb attacks the authorities blamed on Islamist rebels.

Troops were swarming in Sidi Moussa area in a continuing two-week-long offensive to try to wipe out bases of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the most radical Islamist faction locked in nearly six years of conflict with the government forces over power.

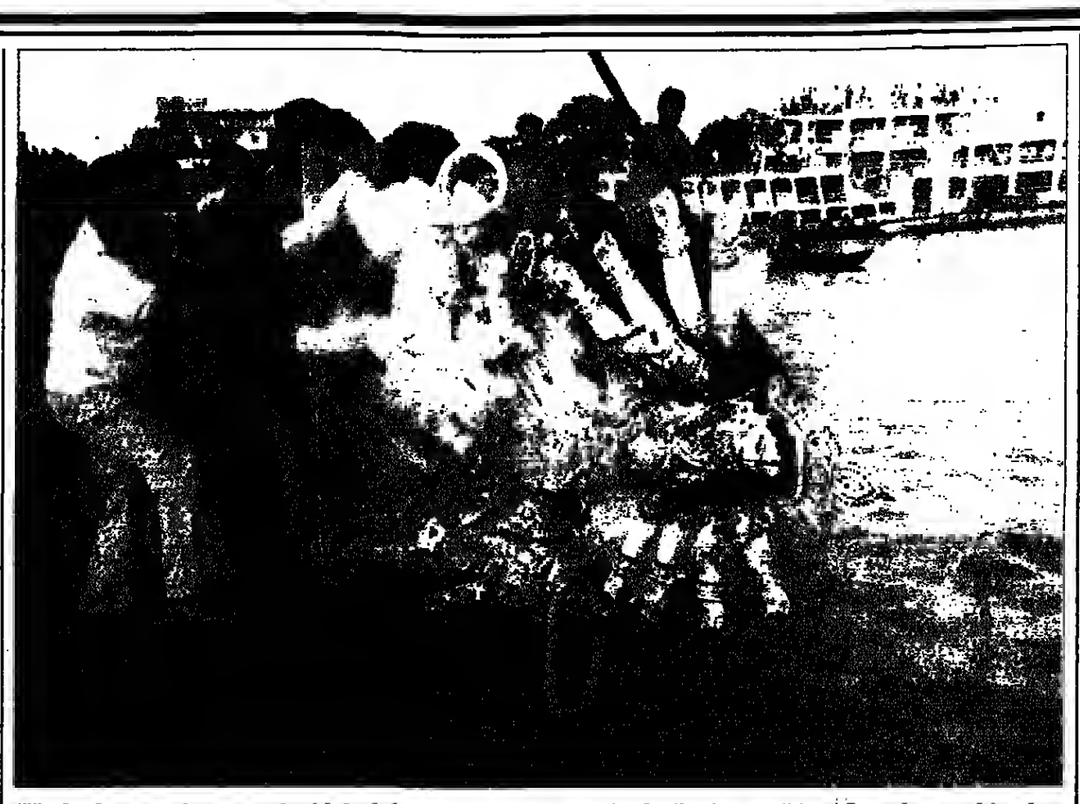
Security forces killed 11 Islamist rebels in the western town of Oran and two guerrillas in Algiers in the past three days, Al Acil newspaper said without giving further details.

Two gunmen burst into an optician sbop in the eastern town of Constantine killing the owner, a member of the Islamist- leaning Movement of a Peaceful Society (MPS) and a candidate for the Oct. 23 local elections, said Liberte.

The newspaper named the optician as Noureddine Nait, shot at the bead and cbest in the Wednesday's attack. His party, one of two Islamist-oriented legal movements, is a junior member of coalition government dominated by President Liamine Zeroual's supporters.

No one claimed the killing and the newspaper said the assailants were thought to be Islamist rebels.

More than 60,000 people bad died in Algeria's violence since early 1992 wben the authorities cancelled a general election in whicb Islamists had taken a commanding lead.



Hindu devotees immerse the idol of their goddess 'Durga' in the Buriganga River Saturday marking her departure from the world after conquering the evil forces. The Hindu community, which constitutes 12.1 per cent of predominantly Muslim Bangladesh's 120 million population, celebrates the Durga Puja for five days. The community celebrates 13 such Puja festivals in 12 months (AFP photo)

If weak, British nurse could be spared flogging — legal experts

DUBAI (AP) — A Britisb nurse sentenced to 500 lashes in a murder case in Saudi Arabia could be spared the punishment if ber lawyers can prove she is too weak to endure it, legal sources said Saturday.

The nurse, Lucille McLauchlan, 31, was sentenced to eigbt years in jail and 500 strokes of a whip after she was convicted as an accessory in the murder of Yvonne Gilford, a 55-year-old Australian nurse.

Their colleague, Deborah Parry, 38, also British, was convicted of intentional murder, a crime punishable under Saudi law by death unless the victim's closest relative agrees to commute the sentence to a jail term in return for financial compensation.

The sentences have caused an outcry in Britain whose foreign secretary, Robin Cook, described the possible lashings as "wholly unacceptable in the modern world."

In recent weeks, hope has been raised that Parry may escape execution — nurse Gilford's brother, Frank Gilford, is reported to have agreed to a $1.2 million compensation. But McLauchlan's fate still remains unclear.

A lawyer in Saudi Arabia said that "if her lawyers show proof that she is not bealthy enough to withstand the lashes, that would be grounds for waiving them."

McLauchlan cannot directly appeal against her eight-year jail term but her punishment along with Parry's is being reviewed by a higher court under a mandatory procedure similar to an appeals process in other countries.

A legal expert in the eastern city of Dbahran, wbere the murder took place, said the review court could decide that the sentence was too harsh, or too lenient. Finally, the verdicts must be endorsed by another court and by Saudi King Fahd.

Mr. Gilford, who lives in Australia, has not confirmed reports by defence lawyers that be has taken the first step to pardon Parry by declaring his intention to the Saudi court. The next step would be for him to formally waive the death sentence.

If be does that, Parry may either be freed immediately or end up spending no more than five years in prison, said another lawyer.

"Most murder convicts who are forgiven by the victim's family are immediately released," be said.

Like others discussing the case, the lawyers spoke on condition of anonymity in telepbonc interviews from Saudi Arabia.

Parry, McLauchlan and Gilford (the victim) worked together at the King Fahd Military Medical Centre. Gilford's bludgeoned body was found in ber dormitory room, bearing multiple stab wounds. The prosecution said robbery was the motive.

Iran starts wargames in Gulf

U.S. aircraft carrier USS Nimitz rushes to region

DUBAI (R) — Iran's naval Forces on Saturday launched a week of wargames in the Gulf as the U.S. aircraft carrier USS Nimitz rushed towards the volatile region.

Iranian military chiefs said the exercise was aimed at demonstrating the Islamic Republic's ability to stand up to "aggressive powers."

"It's aim is to display Iran's power in defending its security and interests," state radio and television said. "It's message is peace and friendship to all neighbouring countries."

The wargames began as the USS Nimitz, ordered to burry to the Gulf following tension over the Iran-Iraq border, approached the strategic waterway with its battle group of six warships.

Iran has not named a potential aggressor but has said it did not expect a confrontation with the Americans.

The U.S. keeps large naval and air forces in the region to protect the Gulf Arab oil monarchies, to enforce Washington's "dual containment" policy against Iran and Iraq, and to police a "no-fly zone" over southern Iraq.

U.S. combat aircraft based in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab states patrol the "no-fly zone" daily. Patrols were stepped up after Iranian warplanes last week struck two Iraqi bases of the armed Iranian opposition group Mujahedin Khalq.

Washington has warned Tehran that U.S. pilots could shoot down Iranian aircraft if they violated the flight ban, imposed by the U.S. and its allies in 1992 to protect Iraqi Shiites from Iraqi air force.

Among the high-tech weaponry in the American arsenal is the "Tomahawk" — a low-flying cruise missile whicb can be launched from ships, submarines, aircraft and mobile ground units. U.S. forces have fired scores of "Tomahawks" against Iraqi targets since the 1991 Gulf war.

The Nimitz battle group — the 73,000-tonne carrier with 50 combat aircraft plus an escort of two cruisers, one destroyer, one frigate, one submarine and one support ship — was being rusbed in to reinforce a U.S. fleet of five destroyers, three frigates and two mine counter-measure ships already in the Gulf.

A U.S. Navy spokesman at fifth fleet headquarters in Bahrain said the Nimitz had not entered the Gulf yet. He said there would be no statement until the battle group had passed through the strait of Hormuz and was in Gulf waters.

Iran's Defence Minister Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani said earlier this week he saw no reason for a clasb with U.S. forces.

"From our side we do not see any reason for a confrontation. We are not sure about the intentions of the other side."

The Pirouzi (Victory)-8 exercise was being staged jointly by the Iranian Navy and naval units of the Revolutionary Guards.

Destroyers, frigates, fast attack boats, bovercraft, fighter and reconnaissance aircraft, and two of Iran's three Russian Kilo-Class diesel submarines manoeuvred in a 39,000-square kilometres area between Lavan island opposite the Gulf Arab state of Qatar and Kuwait in the northern Gulf.

The wargames, held every year, were planned before Washington ordered the Nimitz to skip a Singapore port call and basten to the Gulf from the South China Sea.

The order followed Iran's hit-and-run air raids on the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq, which the U.S. this week included for the first time in a list of "terrorist" organisations.

Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who stepped down as Iran's president in August but still wields weighty political influence in Tehran, said rushing the Nimitz to the Gulf was a reflection of Washington's confused policies on Iran.

"The American warship Nimitz bas cancelled its scbedule to move towards Iran with the excuse that Iran bas bombed Iraq. But after realising this was a bad move, they say we are not coming because of Iran but because of Iraq," be said at Friday's prayer sermon on the Tehran University campus.

A Pentagon official, Colonel Richard Bridges, had said it was reasonable to assume a connection between the order to the Nimitz and Iran's air raids on rebel bases.

But U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen said three days later the move was a warning directed at Iraq, not Iran.

"They have become reactive and confused," Mr. Rafsanjani said. "America does not protest and even approves when Turkey bombs Iraq on a daily basis... but when we attack once and hit terrorists, they move the Nimitz. What kind of double standards is this?"

Dancing KLM crew brought down to earth

AMSTELVEEN (AFP) — A pilot and two cabin crew who went dancing atop a Boeing 747 have been "severely punished" by KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, it was reported Saturday. The jumbo jet's first officer and two female cabin crew had climbed onto the top of the aircraft for fun during a stopover in Guatemala City last month. But their antics were snapped by a passing Belgian photographer and the picture, showing the three in uniform laughing as they wobbled along on top of the plane, was published worldwide. KLM was not amused and "severely punished" the three, De Telegraaf said. It gave no details, but added that the aircraft's captain was suspended for a week.

Woman slaps Papandreou for dishonouring 'all women'

ATHENS (AFP) — Dimitra Papandreou, Greece's former first lady whose nude photographs are regularly splashed in a daily newspaper here, was slapped around the face Friday by a woman who accused her of dishonouring her sex. Papandreou, the widow of former statesman Andreas Papandreou, was signing her memoirs at a publishers when she was pounced upon by Natassa Aktypi. "You bave dishonoured all women," Aktypi shouted, dealing her target two sharp slaps before being rushed away by security guards. Papandreou emerged from the building a short while later, after having met Aktypi, a 34-year-old married tax inspector, to say she would not be pressing charges.

Gun-toting granny gets no jail for casino heist

ALBUQUERQUE (R) — A 61-year-old grandmother wbo robbed a New Mexico Indian casino at gunpoint has escaped jail time because a federal judge ruled the casino was a "criminal enterprise" at the time of her heist. U.S. District Judge James Parker said Loretta Martinez should serve five years probation rather than go to prison and that she need not repay the Camel Rock Casino near Santa Fe for the full $7,000 she stole on April 21. "The Pueblo's [Indian community's] unlawful conduct contributed significantly to provoking wrongful conduct of Martinez," Parker said at the sentencing hearing.

A sign of the times in South Dakota

SOUTH DAKOTA (R) — The state of South Dakota has started putting up billboards at its borders warning drug dealers to stay out, officials said. "Warning: If you bring drugs into South Dakota, plan to stay a long, long time," the signs read.

They huffed and puffed, but to no avail

BOGOTA (R) — President Ernesto Samper was briefly stranded in rural Colombia after the engines on his aging presidential jet failed to start for a flight back to the capital. The Belgian-made Fokker aircraft, purchased for the presidency in the mid-1970s, was due to take Samper, U.S. Ambassador Myles Frechette and other officials back to Bogota from central Tolima province where they attended a ceremony at a police airbase earlier in the day. But officials huffed and puffed in the heat of the aircraft's cockpit, the president's *pilots* and his men couldn't get the Fokker's engines going again.

PLC speaker denies Jordan-PNA relations in trouble over Yassin

(Continued from page 1)

Hamas leader Ahmad Yassin and other Palesonian prisoners for the two Mossad agents involved in the assassination attempt against Hamas' politburo chief Khaled Misha'al, was aimed at undermining his leadership.

Mr. Qoureia said that contrary to the news reports, Mr. Arafat stressed on the need to strengthen the coordination with Jordan and welcomed the release of Sheikh Yassin.

"The release of Sheikh Yassin... would enhance unity between the Palestinian people," said Mr. Qoureia.

Meanwhile in Ramallah, followers of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's Fateh faction held a rally Saturday in his support, the Associated Press reported.

"We are out here today to show that we stand behind President Arafat and against conspiracy attempts by Jordan and Israel to take over the leadership of the Palestinian people," said Iyad Asfi, a student wbo attended the rally.

Nearly one thousand supporters of Mr. Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) faction, Fateh, turned out in downtown Ramallah chanting "Abu Ammar, we are behind you 100 per cent."

Meanwhile, Agence France Presse quoted the head of the preventive police in the Gaza Strip, Mohammad Dahlan, as accusing the Israeli prime minister of helping Hamas wage "terrorist acts" by freeing some of its leaders.

"Benyamin Netanyahu belps Hamas in its terrorist operations," said Colonel Dahlan in an interview with the Egyptian newspaper Al Ahram.

"The last Hamas operations saved Netanyahu from the crisis he found himself in. It was a life buoy enabling him to relaunch attacks against the Palestinian [National] Authority," Col. Dahlan was quoted as saying.

He also criticised the relations between Hamas and Jordan, questioning the release of Sheikh Yassin to Jordan and the fact that Amman welcomed former Hamas leader Musa Abu Marzouk in April on his release from the U.S. where he was detained.

Mr. Qoureia said that he briefed Dr. Majali on the results of President Arafat's meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu on Wednesday and the forthcoming meeting between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in the U.S.

He said that following Mr. Arafat's meetings with the right-wing Israeli premier, "it is difficult to be optimistic."

Mr. Qoureia said that during the meeting, the Palestinians insisted on the Israeli pullout from the Palestinian territories in line with the Oslo accords.

He said that resuming negotiations with Israel was contingent on the Jewish state's implementation of accords, especially the articles that call for Israeli redeployment from further West Bank territory.

"The focal point in the agreement with the Israelis is the land. If no Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian lands took place, the [peace] agreement with Israel remains meaningless," Mr. Qoureia said.

He said that it is premature to say that Palestinian-Israeli relaodns have improved.

68 new runners join poll race bringing total to 508

(Continued from page 1)

over water and sovereignty on some of our land."

On the other hand, 195 banners of one of the few opposiodn candidates in the race, Secretary General of the Ba'ath Party Khalil Haddadin, were removed from the streets of Amman yesterday because they were referring to "the Zionist enemy."

"On Friday night, they started removing my banners, without giving me any written explanaiion and under the order of the governor of Amman," Mr. Haddadin, who is running for the Christian seat of the Amman Third District, told the Jordan Times, adding that he intends to sue the Amman Municipality for the matter.

He said the banners removed were calling for a "boycott of all Israeli products, to support local industry, and no to normalisaodn."

Another opposition candidate in Mr. Haddadin's district, Toujan Faisal, is expected to start her campaign soon.

Independent observers note that the number of candidates *this year appear lower than* 1993 in many densely-populated and underprivileged districts, and explain it by the boycott of the elecdons declared by the Muslim Brotherhood and its political arm, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), as well as nine other left-leaning opposition pardes and the union of professional associations.

In the Amman's First District, tradiodnally an Islamist stronghold, only 21 candidates have so far joined the race for the three allocated Muslim seats.

The same applies to another underprivileged district in the capital, the Amman Second District, in which over 130,000 registered voters are called to choose three Muslim deputies among 17 candidates.

According to the Ministry of Interior, a total of 269,810 voters are registered in these two districts, whicb include two refugee camps, but it remains to be seen bow many of them will collect their voting cards and bow many will go to the polls, turning a deaf ear to the Muslim Brotherhood.

"The (Muslim) Brothers are in every school and in every shop here; they enjoy strong support and the people listen to them. Nobody on my street will go to vote," said one young resident of Al Hussein refugee camp.

According to Hani Hourani, director of Al Urdun Al Jadid, a research centre specialised in analysing and documenting Jordan's democratisation process, the boycott announced by the Islamists and left-leaning opposiodn groups "could result in a low turnout especially in the big cides."

In urban areas, Mr. Hourani said, "people are more exposed to the political climate and do not have a real will to participate [in the elecdons]," due to the current three-month long crisis between the government and the opposiodn.

The crisis, which exploded over controversial amendments to the Press and Publications Law introduced in May, reacbed its highest peak in July, wben the Muslim Brotherhood took the unprecedented decision to boycott the elections.

IAEA submits positive report on Iraq, but keeps file open

(Continued from page 1)

uranium required for weapons-grade material, the report said.

But there were no indications that Iraq had produced "more than a few grammes" of weapons-usable nuclear material by its own means, "all of which has been removed from Iraq."

There were also no indications that Iraq "otherwise acquired weapons-usable nuclear material."

All the fuel from an Iraqi research reactor, which Iraq planned to divert to its clandestine weapons programme, had been "verified and fully accounted for by the IAEA and removed from Iraq."

Finally, "there are no indications that there remains in Iraq any physical capability for the production of amounts of weapons-usable nuclear material of any practical significance."

But the report noted that key questions remained concerning Iraq's nuclear potential, and that the IAEA would require access to information from foreign sources to verify certain information.

Iraq submitted its most recent "final" account of its nuclear programme in September 1996.

But the IAEA said that "no absolute assurances can be given with regard to the completeness" of the Iraqi report.

"Some uncertainty is inevitable in any country-wide technical verification process which aims to prove the absence of readily cancellable objects or activities.

"The extent to which such uncertainty is acceptable is a policy judgement," the report said.

The agency's monitoring system meanwhile "is predicated on the assumption that Iraq retains the capability to exploit, for nuclear weapons purposes, any material or technology to which it may gain access in the future."

But the monitoring system had so far not detected "any indications of ongoing proscribed activities or the presence in Iraq of proscribed equipment or materials."

Iraq has been under a U.N. trade and oil embargo since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The Security Council is due to discuss from next Thursday whether to impose additional punitive measures against specific Iraqi officials to protest Iraq's continued blockage of U.N. inspectors.

Mr. Butler concluded in his report released on Monday that Iraq was continuing to conceal weaponry from his inspectors, mainly related to germ warfare, and in the past month had denied access to sites suspected of containing suspicious material.

Turkish deputy PM wants troops in Iraq indefinitely

(Continued from page 1)

possible drawbacks of such a settlement," Mr. Ecevit said. "But our military presence there has become a serious force to be reckoned with, even if it doesn't stay there permanently."

The latest operation inside Iraq involved some 16,000 troops, half of them still in places following a May offensive.

The military claimed Friday to have killed 764 rebels in the three-week-old operaodn while an Iraqi Kurdish group allied with Turkish soldiers claimed it has killed 157 Turkish Kurdish rebels over the past three days.

The Iraqi group, Kurdistan Democratic Party, or KDP, said it has managed to drive away the Turkish Kurdish rebels from most of the areas northeast of Al Amadiyah region, some 15 kilometres to the Turkish border. KDP put its own losses at eight.

There were *unconfirmed* media reports that Turkey was pulling out some troops and tanks from northern Iraq.